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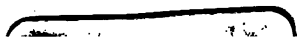
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LIGHT AND SHADE.

LIGHT AND SHADE ;

OR,

THE MANOR HOUSE OF HARDINGE.

BY REV. THOMAS J. POTTER,

ALL HALLOWS' COLLEGE, DUBLIN,

THOR OF "THE TWO VICTORIES," "THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER,"
LEGENDS, LYRICS, AND HYMNS," ETC., ETC.



"The liquid drops of Tears that you have shed,
Shall come again, transform'd to orient Pearl."

DUBLIN:

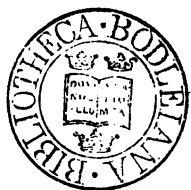
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TO THE VERY REVEREND
MONSIGNORE BARTHOLOMEW WOODLOCK, D.D.,
RECTOR OF
The Catholic University of Ireland,
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF
MANY KINDLY COUNSELS AND MANY FRIENDLY OFFICES,
The memory of which
IS AMONGST THE MOST CHERISHED RECOLLECTIONS
OF SOME VERY HAPPY YEARS,
This little Work
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

THERE is very little to be said by way of preface to this book, which forms the fourth volume of a Series intended for innocent and rational amusement. The kindly favour which has been so plentifully bestowed by the Catholic public, and in a degree far beyond my expectations, upon "The Two Victories," "The Rector's Daughter," &c., will, I trust, be sufficient apology for the appearance of this work which is now presented, with much diffidence, to the notice of the same public; and in the hope that it may not be found unworthy of the same generous support and the same warm commendation as have been awarded to those which have gone before it. I have so often had occasion to dwell on the object which I proposed to myself, and the motives which influenced me in taking up my pen to labour, however humbly, in this department of Catholic literature, that any lengthened repetition of them here would be out of place. In writing this

nothing has been further from my mind than the idea of attempting to compose a "sensation" story. Neither have I proposed to myself to write a "novel" in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Such an undertaking would scarcely befit my pen, or the motives which influenced me in taking up that pen. But, premising that I have not attempted to write either a sensation story, or a novel, in the modern sense of the word, I candidly admit that, assuming God and the duties of religion to have a most intimate and essential relation with our daily life and its ever-varying circle of actions, I have striven, honestly and earnestly, and with all the ability at my command, to write a story which shall possess, so far as is in my power, the interest and attraction of the novel, and yet be free from the poison which is hidden in so much of the literature of the day—a poison but too surely implanted in the souls of those (more especially the young) who give themselves up to the indiscriminate perusal of the history of mere intrigue, or unlawful and unholy passion. Knowing, as we do, that in these days our people, and especially our youth, *will* read for good or for evil; and believing that a book may be amusing and yet be innocent and Catholic, I have aspired to take a lowly place in the ranks of those who have laboured, not more

earnestly, but, perhaps, more successfully than myself, to supply the members of the "Household of the Faith" with works of this nature. Whilst striving to make my book as amusing as possible, in order thus to secure and retain the attention of my readers, I trust that I have never lost sight of higher and holier objects. My motives and my views on this matter were so admirably interpreted, and so clearly expressed, in a very able review of "The Rector's Daughter," which appeared soon after the publication of that work, that I cannot refrain from quoting from the review to which I refer—"The Catholic Fictionist," thus writes the reviewer, "labours under many exceptional embarrassments; his story must not deal in sensuality or analyses of the animal passions if he look forward to a fairer reward than indiscriminate popularity; neither must it occupy itself exclusively with illustrations of the Cardinal Virtues, or the Ten Commandments, because the platform they afford is too restricted, if not thoroughly unsuited, for his purpose. Between these extremes—the sensual and the ethical—lies the vast debateable ground which no ordinary talent or ingenuity can discover, but which, once found, furnishes *legitimate* room to the labourer to

time, circumstances have delayed its publication until now. This I cannot regret, inasmuch as it has enabled me to revise what I had written; but, principally, because, making its appearance in the world, as it does, at this most holy season, I know that it will receive a more generous welcome, and that its defects will be more lightly viewed than if it had been ushered into existence at another and less genial moment—because it enables me to greet my readers with all the kindly affections of the Christmas time; and, under the shadow of the holly and the ivy, plants dearer to many than the brightest flowers which deck the earth in summer or in autumn days, enables me, the solemn swell of Christmas anthems sounding sweetly in our ears the while, to wish them, as I do from my inmost heart, and in the good old words of olden times, “A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.”

T. J. P.

Christmas, 1863.



PART I.

IN THE LIGHT.


"There is given
Unto the things of earth, which time hath bent,
A spirit's feeling; and where he hath leant
His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
And Magic."

LIGHT AND SHADE.

&c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

I AM certainly getting into years! Of course I know very well that this is a truth which most of us shrink from confessing; still, as it cannot be helped, and as there is no denying the fact, it is just as well to make a clean breast of it at once, and gain as much credit as possible for the ingenuousness and candour with which I make the aforesaid admission. Yes, I am getting into years. My name is —; well, my name is a matter of no consequence. Perhaps you will discover it before long; but even if you do not, I can, gentle reader, tell you my story just as well without any such knowledge on your part; and, so, if you will kindly attach a proper degree of individuality to the “I” who am narrating this history for your amusement and instruction, we shall, I humbly hope and trust, get on very well together, even although I may not begin by telling you my name, the place of my birth, the

number and names of my godfathers and godmothers, together with the other entertaining and instructive etceteras which are connected with my appearance, and first share in the affairs of this lower world. But to return. I have candidly confessed that I, the narrator of this history, am getting into years. I have often felt it lately. When I comb my hair, I am sometimes surprised to find how easily it slips through the comb (for when I was young I used to find it hard work to perform that operation properly, my locks were so thick and strong), and how plentifully the grey threads are sprinkled through it. Then, I can nearly always tell when there is going to be a change in the weather. A twinge here and a twinge there. I know *what* it means. "Rain," I say to my friends; "we are going to have a change." "Indeed," say they. "How do you know? It looks very settled." I only shake my head wisely, and mutter something about rheumatic twinges, and they pass on their way, smilingly indeed, but I know very well that they mention in confidence to our mutual friends, that So-and-So, poor fellow, is growing old. These little things all help to make a man feel that he is getting into the sere and yellow leaf, about which the poets write so beautifully. I think, however, that I have never felt so forcibly the truth which stands at the head of this chapter, as I did the other day when I was sitting in my  chair, pondering about the commencement of

this present story. I had been asked to write it, and I had determined to do so, and had sat myself down to ponder on what I had undertaken, and how I should set about my task; and, as my thoughts wandered back, back, back, the palpable present melted more and more away into the impalpable past, until I awoke from my day-dream with a strange start, and with a strange feeling at my heart about the long, long time that had passed away since the happy days to which in thought I had drifted back again. It was a moment or two before I could recover myself and fully master my thoughts again; but when I succeeded in doing so, it was with a rather strong conviction on my mind that the times of which I had been thinking were in very truth but things of the past—dried leaves of the spring, which the autumn winds, indeed, may move hither and thither, giving them a momentary motion, but which are dead nevertheless, dead, never, never to live again.


Yes, my thoughts wander back a long, long way; and yet, how I remember those early days! I am a little fellow living in our quaint old home by the side of the sea, the darling of my widowed father's heart, the solace, as I remember he used to say, of his lonely life. I never knew my mother. She was younger, so they told me, than my father. We had an old servant who used to tell me of my mother's long black hair, and her beautiful eyes, and how my father's heart nearly

broke when he lost her. We lived in Yorkshire, in a quiet old house by the side of the sea, as I have already said, but my mother was from the south. My father met her in London and brought her away to his own country home. I know how he loved her, for I remember now, as though it were but yesterday, how, years after he had lost her, he would hold me on his knee, and look long and wistfully into my face, stroking my hair all the while, and whispering softly to himself, "my darling's hair, my darling's eyes," till the tears would come streaming down his face, as I nestled nearer to his heart, and wound my little arms closer and closer round his neck. She had fallen ill soon after I was born, and had died of consumption before she had attained the age of twenty-one. My father never married again. In fact, I think he doted on my mother's memory far too fondly ever even to dream of such a thing. When I had lost him too, as I shall tell in its proper place in this simple narrative, and, the funeral being over, we had begun to put his things aside, I remember how they brought a little key to me which my father had always worn about his neck. They told me that they thought it was the key of a secret drawer in his desk, and that it was most fitting that I should open it. I remember how I waited for two or three days before I attempted to do so; but one calm evening, with my young heart almost bursting with the sorrow that was on it, I went to his room, and with trem-

bling hands unlocked his desk to see what it was that he had guarded with such sacred care. There were all my own simple letters which I had written from school to him, not one wanting, tied round with a red ribbon and labelled "my darling's letters." There was my first copy book, too, and several other little memorials of my childish days. I could scarcely see them for my blinding tears; but I put them, softly, I remember, on one side and took the key of the secret drawer from my bosom. I remember that it was a second or so before I could discover the hole, for my eyes were very dim; but at last I turned the key and opened the drawer. I saw nothing but a small parcel which I seized with eager hands. My fingers trembled, I remember, as I hastily unrolled it, and in a moment more, my mother's hair had fallen at my feet. I knew instinctively that it was my mother's. Two long curls of soft, black hair, was the treasure which my father had guarded with such jealous care. They lay at my feet for a moment ere I could stoop to take them up. When at last I did so, it was with a gentle and a reverent touch. I laid them on the desk before me, and I know that I cried as I had never cried in all my life before, not even when, three days ago, I had stood over his open grave. I remained before the drawer till it was dark, and an old servant, the same who had nursed me, came into the room and led her poor boy, so she called me, away. I know that I was glad to lay

my poor aching head upon her honest breast. I know how it eased my poor desolate heart to weep without restraint; and I know, too, that before she led me away from the room where I had opened his desk, I had learnt more of my father's love for my mother, although I had not heard a single word on the subject, than human tongue, no matter how eloquent, could ever have taught me. But I digress.

I am a little fellow in the old house by the sea-side. I have neither brother nor sister to play with, but I never feel lonely except when my father leaves home for a few days which happens twice or thrice in the year. Even at this lapse of time, I have a vivid recollection of my father's sad, grave face, and of the solemn, yet loving awe with which I used to sit and look up into his mournful eyes, and wonder, in my childish way, what made him look so pale, and whether he was very sick, or whether there were anything which I could do to make him look more happy. Young as I am I understand, too, that we are poor, and that my father is too sickly to do anything which may make us richer. I am in no ways troubled by the absence of children of my own age, who might be playmates for me. When *he* is at home I never feel the want of companions, for we are always together, and we are all-in-all to one another. We stroll out, hand in hand, on the fine mornings by the side of the sounding sea, I gathering such a store of shells and pretty




shining stones, that the capacious pockets of my father's morning coat are swollen out with the childish treasures which I compel him to carry home for me. After a while I grow tired, and we sit down to rest—my father upon the sand, and I upon his knee, with my little arm tight about his neck. We sometimes sit for a long time, till the babbling voice of the summer waves breaking upon the sounding shore lulls me to sleep in the manly arms that pillow me with such a gentle touch. At last something awakens me, and I feel my father's hands gently stroking my long hair, as my head rests upon his breast; and ere I open my eyes to let him know that I am awake, I hear his voice murmuring words of love and fond regret. Then I nestle closer to him, and after awhile open my eyes as if I had only just awoke, and had not heard him whispering to himself. Sometimes his face is wet with tears, and his eyes are fixed upon the spire of a little church which we can see from the seashore. We often walk there too, but generally in the evening, for my mother rests in the grave-yard of that little church; and whenever I wake from my sleep and find him with tears upon his face, looking at the distant spire, I know very well what he is thinking about; and, in my childish simplicity, I know that I sometimes think that it was cruel of my mother to go and leave us so desolate and lonely. Once or twice I remember that I ask him if it were not so, and if my mother were not very cruel to go

away and leave us to ourselves, when we would have loved her so dearly, and been so devoted to her; but he cries so bitterly, as he puts his hand upon my mouth, and raises his eyes with a solemn look to heaven, that I never ask him this question more than once or twice, although I remember very well that the thought is often running in my mind. "She was too pure for us," is all that he says, "and God took her up into the bright sky to be an angel; but we shall see her again, my darling, if we are good." "But, papa," I answer, "perhaps she wont know us. It is such a long time since she went away, and she would never know me, for I was only a child when she died, and now I am growing very big, and it would be so sad if she did not know me, and I love her so, so much." As my childish tongue runs on, he draws me to his breast, and stops my innocent prattle with his kisses, only whispering every now and then, that she will surely know us if we are only good, and that we must love her very much, and we shall soon go to her in heaven. At last we get up and return home, and I am so proud to have my dinner with him, sitting opposite to him in my chair, which is very long in the legs in order to raise me up to the table, and with a rail in front of it to keep me from falling out. I am sometimes very indignant about the rail, and protest vigorously against it, till a look from my father subdues me, and I submit to the degradation with as good a grace as I am able. Before we begin to

eat our dinner, however, I have to submit to another insult, for our old servant comes in with a hateful pinafore, which she insists upon tying on to keep my clothes clean. My dignity can hardly brook the insult; but again my father's eye is upon me, and I give in, only I kick poor old Mary all the time she is tying the odious pinafore. I suppose, however, that my kicks are not very formidable, for she does not seem to heed them, but goes on methodically with her work, and when she has completed the operation generally finishes by giving me a hearty kiss. Then we have our dinner. I have my own little knife and fork; but that busy Mary *will* insist upon cutting my meat into little pieces, as if I could not cut it very well myself. Mary is the plague of my life. She has lived with us a long time. She was my father's housekeeper before he brought my mother home. She often tells me, when my father is away, what a sweet young creature my poor mother was; and my father sometimes, but not so often, tells me how Mary nursed my mother through her long last sickness, and that I must love Mary very much because she loved my mother dearly, and has been a mother to me since my own poor one was taken away. Mary keeps our old house very clean and neat, and is herself a picture of tidiness, with her smooth grey hair and her spotless cap. I sometimes think that her face is very like the apples in our orchard when they are quite ripe; but I never say so, for I think, perhaps, that Mary might

not like it, and I am rather afraid of her. I am sure that I love Mary; but then, she is so cross when I tear my clothes, and she will make me go to bed so early in the evening, that she is the plague of my life. I sit nodding on my little chair, or on my father's knee, and every now and then staring at the clock that stands upon the mantel-piece, for I know that as soon as ever it strikes eight Mary will make her appearance to carry me away. At last she comes, and I seize my father round the neck, and kick out viciously at Mary with my feet; but she bears me off, nevertheless, after a dozen kisses from my father. We struggle all the way up stairs, Mary repeating something about "early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise," and I refusing to listen to or believe in the truth of the wise saying. However, I give in at last, and after I have knelt down at Mary's knees, and clasped my little hands, repeating with her, "Our Father, who art in Heaven," we are very good friends by the time she has laid me in my little cot; and the last thing that I feel before I drop off to sleep is Mary's hand resting upon mine, and the last thing I see is Mary sitting by the side of my bed waiting for me to fall asleep before she goes away. She is with me before I awake in the morning, and teazes me almost as much as she did the night before. *Then*, I would not go to bed, *now*, I will not get up; but Mary says that my father is waiting for me, and that my new milk is



ready, and that I must be a good boy and get up. Then, how she does wash me; and I sometimes think that when I open my mouth to scream, she puts more soap into it than is at all necessary, and then, I am quite sure, is pleasant. But at last I am dressed and waiting to run down stairs; but Mary will not let me go until I have knelt down again and said my childish prayer. Mary is very particular about my prayers; but I know that I am very glad when they are over, and I have run away to find my father. And so the days glide by. As I have said, when my father is at home I am quite satisfied and wish for no other companion; but he sometimes goes away, and then I am very lonely, and wish very much that I had a brother or a sister to play with and keep me company. When my father has gone away, I cry very much, and Mary says reproachfully to me that I am naughty, and that my papa would be very angry if he only knew. Then I tell Mary that I don't care for her, and that I will be naughty if I like; and sometimes Mary shakes me and gives me a gentle blow, but it doesn't hurt me, and I don't heed it, for she always kisses me very soon, and gives me sweetmeats all the rest of the day. When my father has gone, our parlour is closed, and I am not allowed to go into it. I sit in Mary's little room, wondering how she can possibly move her fingers so fast as she knits away at her stockings, and thinking what a clever woman she must be. There is a country girl who helps Mary in

the kitchen, and I sometimes steal away to play at hide-and-seek with her. I remark that her hair is very red, and not at all so smooth as mine, and that her hands are very dirty, but I don't care for that: and we have great fun until we hear Mary coming to look for me, when the poor girl runs away and seizes a pan in the scullery, whilst I pretend to be oblivious of my crumpled clothes and my dirty slip. I very seldom go down to the sea when my father is away, for Mary does not care for walking, and she never allows me to be out of her sight. Sometimes she dresses me in my best, and, putting on her own scarlet cloak, we set off to take tea with some friend or other of Mary's in the village hard by. These are great events in my simple life, and as the good dames of the village are very gentle with the "poor, motherless bairn," and pet me very much, I am often very sick the morning after one of these festivities, and Mary declares that I shall never go again; but a dose of camomile tea soon sets me to rights, and Mary's displeasure disappears with my sickness. Then my father's room has to be cleaned, and scrubbed, and polished till its cleanliness becomes quite painful, and the whole house is turned upside down. An old woman from the village comes up, and she and Mary, and the red-haired girl in the kitchen, scrub and clean all day through, till I am ready to cry with vexation at being left so much alone. But I have one consolation—I know that all this is in preparation for

my father's return, and I tease Mary's life out about it. "Lawk-a-daisy," she exclaims, twenty times a-day, "how the child do worrit and tease, to be sure."

But the happy day comes at last. The plumpest chicken in our little farm-yard has been slaughtered, the fire has been lighted in the parlour, and everything is in readiness for my father's return. I am dressed in my best, hours before he can possibly arrive; but I never leave the window which looks out on the road, but sit straining my eyes to catch the first glimpse of him. At last I see his gig turning the corner of the shady lane which leads to our house, and, with a loud cry, I rush out, and run down the lane to meet him. As soon as he sees me he springs out of his gig, and in a moment more I have both my arms round his neck, and am crying as if my heart is broken, only, you know, I am crying for joy. We neither of us speak for some time, but at last we both get into the gig, and the reins being placed in my hands, the old grey pony which my father drives brings us to the door of our cottage, where Mary stands, with her ruddy face, her smooth grey hair, and her spotless cap, to welcome my father home and tell him what a good boy "Master Atty" has been in his absence. The first thing after this is to unpack my "present," for my father never comes home empty-handed, but always has something for his darling, and then we sit down to our dinner. On these rare

occasions Mary even foregoes the putting on of the odious pinafore, and I am supremely happy. My father and I begin our old life again, and, for a time, all about me is sunshine and unclouded happiness.

Simple memories of the past! Sitting in my chair, I forget the by-gone years, the wrinkles on my brow, and the silver threads in my hair, as my boyhood's visions crowd upon my brain, and I cannot find in my heart to banish them, to drive them away by the sterner realities of the present. It is however but the wind of autumn stirring the dried leaves of the spring, moving hither and thither amongst them, giving them a momentary motion, a *semblance* of life, but no more than a semblance, for they are decayed, withered and dead, never, never to live again; and, for some brief space, let the autumn wind blow on.

CHAPTER II.

My childhood glides away, but our life is substantially the same. I hear them say that I am growing tall; but, somehow, I do not grow strong. I have a bad cough nearly every winter, and sometimes I have great aches and pains in my bones; but I seldom complain, for it makes my father so sad that I bear my pains as well as I am able rather than make him uneasy. The doctor calls at our house very often, nevertheless, and gives me a great deal of medicine, and when I see him coming I run away and hide myself. My father and he speak a great deal together, and I sometimes hear the doctor talking about "constitutional weakness," and I don't at all understand what it means. My father is very careful of me, and goes away from home less than ever, and when he is obliged to go, leaves so many injunctions upon Mary concerning my health, and keeping me out of the wet, that I can scarcely understand it, but I sometimes think that there must be something wrong about me, and that, perhaps, I am going home to my mother. I remember that this thought makes me very sad, not that I am afraid of it, but because I know that it will break my father's heart to lose me. I remember

one winter that the frost and snow remain a very long time, and that I think it very tiresome, for I am not allowed to go out of our house, and I grow very weary of my confinement. However, the winter passes away at last, and the spring comes, but it is not at all like spring, it is so cold and wet, and my bones ache more than ever. I bear it as well as I can; but, I remember, that it becomes too much for me at last. One evening I feel worse than ever. I sit looking for a long time at my father, and wishing that he knew how ill I am. I try to rise from my chair to go over to him and tell him, but I fall back again. I remember that my father rises hastily from his chair with a terrible ghastliness on his face and rushes over to me. I have just strength enough to put my arms about his neck, and lay my head upon his breast with two or three great sobs, and then I remember no more.

When I come to myself and open my eyes, it is broad daylight. I am in my bed and my father is close by my side. His face is very white, and he looks very sad; but when he sees that I know him, he stoops down to kiss me, and then begins to cry. He lays his face upon my pillow and hides it; but I know that he is crying, and it makes me very sad. I am very glad when Mary comes over from a distant part of the room and begins to comfort him, telling him that the danger is over, and that I shall soon be well again. I know from all this that I have been very ill; and when

I try to lift my arm to put it round my father's neck, as his head rests upon my pillow, I find that I can scarcely move it, and so I content myself with smiling at him, and motioning him to put his face closer to mine that I may kiss him. Our doctor and a strange gentleman with him soon come in, and when they see my eyes open, and that I recognize them, they shake hands heartily with my father, and I am very glad for his sake. They sit down on my bed, and one of them holds my hand for a long time, and every now and then looks at his watch. Then they both retire into a corner of the room, and talk together very softly. After a while they call my father over to them, and I am glad to see, although I cannot hear their words, that they speak cheerfully, and again shake hands with him. Mary is bathing my brow with something very nice and cooling, and I feel quite free from pain, and should be very happy, only I cannot help thinking how pale and sad my father looks. When the doctors have gone, for the strange gentleman was a doctor too, my father kneels down by the side of my bed and raises his eyes to heaven. I clasp my hands and try to whisper with him, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name," but my voice fails me, and I am content to listen to him. I love him, oh, how I love him, as I listen to his voice, and hear him thanking his God that He has spared his darling to him. Somehow my mother is in my thoughts too, and I seem to feel

as if she were very near me, and as if some strange tie, the nature of which I cannot at all understand, were binding us three together. But I am very happy for my father's sake, and I remember that the first time I am able to put a sentence together, I draw his head quite close to my mouth, that I may whisper to him how I love him with all my heart and soul.

I recover very slowly; but at last I leave my bed, and my father carries me down to our little parlour. The spring has melted into early summer by this time, and as he lays me upon the sofa, and then draws it over to the window, as I hear the birds singing in our garden outside, and the scent of the flowers comes rushing in upon me, I feel as if I had returned to life. Mary presently ushers in several of our friends from the village, who, after curtseying to my father, come over to my sofa and kiss me as tenderly as if I were their own. I am very glad to see them again, and it does me a great deal of good to hear them speaking in their broad, north country dialect of "the poor bairn, the poor motherless bairn," only I am sorry to see that my father steps out through the open window into the garden, and remains away a few moments, for I know *why* he has gone out. He soon returns, however, bringing some beautiful flowers in his hand for me, as if this were what took him out, and he insists upon our honest neighbours remaining to tea. Mary bustles about and soon sets a Yorkshire tea upon the table.

Our friends are a little shy at first, for my father is somewhat higher in the social scale than the worthy farmers who are their husbands; but he is grateful for their honest affection for his boy, and does his best to make them feel at home. He soon succeeds, and we have a very pleasant evening; they sitting round the table in our best parlour, and I lying upon my sofa, the object of so many attentions and so much care that it is almost too much for me. I cannot eat or drink much, but the little I take I can take but from one hand, and that is *his*,—oh, surely, none but *his*,—although the others are never weary of tempting me with this dainty or that.

I rally very rapidly now, and am soon able to be wheeled out into our garden, where I sit for hours together with my father by my side. My sickness seems to linger round me, though I am recovering, they say, rapidly; and one effect which it has had upon me has been to render me very “dreamy” as it were. I say “dreamy,” for I have no other word to express my meaning. As I sit in my well-cushioned chair under a shady tree, my father reading aloud to me, my mind often wanders away from what I am listening to, and I find myself thinking of my dead mother, of angels, and such immaterial objects; and there is an atmosphere of romance, or of spirituality about me, I don’t know which, that I never felt before, or, at all events, which I never felt in the same degree. This is what I mean when I say that my

sickness seems to have rendered me very dreamy. I find great delight in allowing my mind to float away, as it were, on the stream of thoughts of this kind, which seem so often to be round about me, and I feel quite sorry when my father, by a gentle touch of his hand, recalls me to myself, and I cannot understand why he looks so uneasy when he finds my mind thus wandering, or why he is so anxious to keep me amused. However, all this gradually passes away as I recover my strength, and I am, after a time, able to walk a little way; and when I have got thus far I am very urgent with my father to take me down to the seaside, for I am quite anxious to have the blue waves rolling at my feet again. Our old pony is harnessed to the gig, and I am well wrapped up, and, to my great glee, off we start. I am so delighted to be on the smooth beach once more, that my father looks quite happy to witness my joy, and we are both in high spirits. As we ride slowly home my father tells me for the first time that I have been very ill, and that for more than a month they had almost made up their minds that I should be taken away from them. As my father tells me this I nestle as close to his side as ever the cushions of the gig will allow me. He puts his arm round me and presses me gently to him, and, although we neither of us speak, we comprehend one another very well. When I ask him what has been the matter with me, he tells me something about the constitutional weakness

of which I heard the doctor speaking. I understand it as little as ever, but I don't care for that, as I am very happy.

One day soon after this my father asks me if I should like to go to a beautiful country across the sea where the sun is always warm, and where clusters of beautiful grapes grow upon the hedges. I look grave at first, and ask very anxiously whether I shall have to go alone; but when he tells me that he will accompany me, I brighten up immediately, and say that I should like to go very much; and when he has told me that we are to start as soon as ever I am strong enough to travel, and that we are to spend the winter in that beautiful country beyond the sea, I become very anxious to set off, and tell my father twenty times a day that I am quite sure that I am strong enough to travel now.

Towards the end of summer my father and I set off, leaving Mary to take care of our house whilst we are away. Mary cries very much when we are about to start, and kisses me a great many times; but I do not feel at all sad, because my father is at my side, and I am so anxious to see the beautiful country to which he is taking me. I do not remember much about the journey. I recollect that we travelled very slowly, and that we remained several days at a seaport town, I think, waiting till the sea was calm, and that my father was very angry when the waiter of the hotel at which we had stopped brought him the

bill. I think my father said something about never paying that bill, and that it was an imposition, and he used a great many angry expressions. I got quite frightened lest they should call in the policeman and put us both into prison, and I was very glad when I saw my father take out his purse and pay the bill. At last we were on the steamer, and I was almost wild with delight. My father, however, made me remain quite still, and held me in his arms until we arrived at Calais, and I was not sick at all; and I was quite proud to hear my father say what a brave sailor I was. Then we got into a kind of a great coach, and travelled, I think, for nearly a week, and I became very tired of it; but at length we arrived at our destination, which was a beautiful village in the south of France. Of course I didn't know where we were, but I remember quite well my father telling me this. We take lodgings in a farm house, oh, such a beautiful spot, and I am enchanted with it. The front of it is quite covered with a vine, and the grapes hang in such luxuriant clusters that I think I have never seen anything so lovely. The good woman of the house is very kind to me, and I very soon learn that the "le pauvre enfant" with which she always greets me, means the same as the "poor motherless bairn" of my homely friends in our dear old village in Yorkshire. Her face is very brown, and she does wear such a curious cap that I often wonder what Mary would say if she could see it. But I soon begin to love

her dearly too, and pick up little words of her language. When she is going out into the meadow to milk her cows, or into her yard to look after her poultry, or about any other of her occupations which she thinks will interest me, she knocks ever so modestly at the door of our little room; and although I cannot understand her language, I know that she is asking my father's permission to take "*le pauvre enfant*" with her, and I am always delighted to go. Her children wear such funny little wooden shoes, but they are so polite and gentle, and show me so much respect and consideration, that I love to play with them, although we do not understand a word of one another's language.

I remember as if it were but yesterday the first night we arrived. I was very tired, and the good woman came, at my father's request, to take me to my little bed. He had made me say my prayers at his feet, and he told me that our religion was not the same as that of the people amongst whom we were now living. If I had not been so tired I should have asked him some questions about this, but I did not heed it then. The good woman took me in her motherly arms, and carried me up to my room. My little bed was white as snow, and the window was shaded by the luxuriant vine-leaves. I thought it such a beautiful little room, and my eyes wandered eagerly round it. Suddenly they rested on a picture, which was suspended at the head of my bed, and I motioned to be carried

over to it. It represented a beautiful lady with an infant in her arms. One of his little hands was twined round her neck, and he nestled like a gentle dove upon her breast. There were rays of glory round them both, and I thought it was the prettiest picture that I had ever seen. I gazed earnestly at it for a moment or two, and then turned my eyes enquiringly upon my nurse, and, as well as I was able, made her understand that I wished to know very much who the beautiful lady and the infant were. She looked at me with a soft and tender meaning in her face, and I saw the tears in her eyes. Then, with a very solemn look, she raised her eyes and pointed with her hand to heaven. I did not quite understand her; but I understood, nevertheless, that the lady and the child dwelt in heaven, and I knew that they were very beautiful and very good, and I felt my childish heart drawn to them with a wonderful force, and I motioned to her to raise me up so that I could kiss them. She did so; and I remember, oh, how I remember it! I felt my little heart drawn to them more and more; and I recollect that when I was in my bed I felt very glad that the beautiful lady and the child were over my head, guarding me as it were through the night; and my last thought ere I fell asleep was, that I should dearly like to know more about them, and that I would ask my father the very first thing in the morning to tell me everything he knew concerning them.

Yes, how I remember that night ! I did not know it for some years after, but I know now, that on that night the first step was made towards the accomplishment of a great mercy of God on my behalf, as will be related in the course of this simple little history. I know now that it was a blessed night for me, and that in truth I was a happy child the first time I lay me down to rest with the beautiful lady and her child keeping watch over my head ; and, I thank my God, who in His own inscrutable way brought all this to pass, and never ceased to draw my heart to Himself till at last I laid my weary head with gushing love upon my mother's breast, that she herself might teach me more and more to know the blessed child whom I first saw resting on her bosom in my little bedroom in the South of France.

CHAPTER III.

As soon as I awoke in the morning, the very first thing I did was to raise my eyes and look at the beautiful lady and the child. Although I did not as yet understand altogether who they were, I could not take my eyes off them. It made me very happy to have them near me, and I felt almost sorry when my new friend came into my little room and signified to me that it was time for me to rise. I dressed as quickly as ever I could, and ran down stairs to find my father, that I might bring him up to see the beautiful picture which was hanging over my bed. He smiled at my childish eagerness, but he came up stairs with me at once. I drew him over to my bed, and begged of him to tell me who the lady and the infant were. When he saw my picture, and how much it had taken possession of my mind, he looked very grave, but not at all angry; and, sitting down upon my bed, took me upon his knee. He told me who the infant was, and I bowed my young head in reverence as the sacred name fell upon my ear. When I had looked at my picture in silence for a second or two I began to ask my father eagerly about the lady, and who she was. I remember that my father was rather confused; but at last he told me

that she was the mother of the little infant, Jesus, on her breast, and that all those who were of the same religion as the good people in whose home we were staying were very devout to her, and paid her great reverence, and that her name was Mary. I remember asking him how it was that I had never heard of this before, and why *we* were not devout to her too, since she looked so holy and so good, and since I was sure that her little infant must be very fond of her. My father stroked my hair gently, but he did not answer me, and in my eagerness I repeated my question more urgently than before. At last, I remember, he told me that it was not part of our religion to pay reverence to the lady, and that it was one of the points on which we differed with the Catholics. I grew more and more confused, I remember, as he went on, for I had never heard of these people called Catholics before, and I was very anxious to know more about them. Then he told me that the French were nearly all Catholics, and that their religion was very different from ours. As I sat on his knee, with my arm round his neck, listening to all this, I thought it very strange, and I began to wonder how there could be two religions, and whether their religion was better than ours, and, if so, why we didn't become Catholics too ; or, if our religion was better than theirs, why they did not become Protestants. I was afraid to ask my father all the questions that were running in my mind, lest I might trouble him ; and, moreover,

I saw that it was a subject on which he did not seem to like to speak much. However, after a little while, I took courage, and begged of him to tell me more about the lady, if he pleased. He did not appear to me to know much about her, but he said that she was very good, and that the Catholics prayed to her, and loved her very much. I told him that I should like to pray to her too, if he would allow me; but he stopped me suddenly and repeated what he had said before, that we were Protestants, and that Protestants prayed to God alone. I was sorry when he said this, but he had been so gentle with me all through the conversation, that I ventured to ask him whether, at all events, I might not love her, even if it were wrong to pray to her. He drew me closer to him ere he answered me, but he did so in a moment, and I remember his answer well. I have often thought of it since, and it has brought comfort and consolation to me when I have been thinking of him and his eternal lot. "My child," he said, quite gently, "I did not say it was wrong to pray to her, I only said that we Protestants do not do it, and we must follow the practices of our own religion; but I do not presume to decide the question." "But, father," said I, interrupting him, "may I love her then; it cannot be wrong to love her, she looks so beautiful and so good?" "Oh! surely, my child," was his answer, "surely you may love her, there can be nothing wrong in that."

He rose up at once, and I saw that he was


anxious to discontinue the conversation, and so I did not ask him any more questions; but I was very glad that he had given me permission to love the lady and her child. That same evening when I went to bed, I motioned my nurse to raise me up again that I might kiss them, and, from that time forward, so long as I remained in France, I never went to bed without first kissing my beautiful picture; and although I never spoke to my father about them again, I somehow began to love the lady more and more, and I remember, when I used to be kneeling at my father's feet, reciting my childish prayers, how thoughts of the mother of my little Jesus, would come running through my mind, and almost break out into words, and how, every day, the two became more and more closely connected in my mind, till I could scarcely think of the child without thinking of the mother too.

When we had been at our new home a few days, I remember one evening, as I was looking out of the window, seeing a venerable old man coming towards the house. He was dressed in a long black robe, and his hair, which was quite white, fell down on his shoulders. He looked very amiable and good-natured, and whilst I was wondering who he could be, I saw the children of the house run out to meet him and kneel down before him.

I saw him place his hand upon their heads, after which they rose quickly to their feet, and ran before him to the house. The good woman

met him at the door, and she knelt down too; and, I remember, that I thought it all very strange. Presently she tapped at the door of our room, and said a few words to my father, who told me that the venerable old man was the "Curé," or clergyman of the parish, and that hearing of our arrival, he had come to pay his respects to us. My father went to the door of the room to meet him, and shook him by the hand in our English fashion. I remember that I stood shyly in the corner of the room whilst they interchanged their mutual greetings in a language which I did not understand; but the good man espied me immediately and beckoned me to come over to him. I did so at once, and held out my hand to him, but, instead of taking it, he raised me in his arms, and sitting down on a chair, laid his cheek to mine, so gently and with so much benevolence that I began to like him very much. He remained a long time chatting with my father, all the while retaining my little hand in his, and ever and anon stroking my hair so softly that my heart warmed towards him with that instinctive affection which is so easily awakened in a young child's soul, and which, nevertheless, is so seldom excited by an unworthy object, or by one who is not worthy to have lavished upon him that choicest of all blessings, the innocent love of an innocent childish heart. Of course, I dare say, that I may be deceived, but whenever I happen to see a man upon whom little children seems thus instinctively, as it

were, to lavish the love and trusting confidence of their childish hearts, it would be very difficult to make me believe that such a one can be a bad man. Of course it may be mere speculation on my part, but I have an idea, which it would be difficult indeed to root out of my mind, that the instincts of an innocent child are as true to their object as the needle is to the pole, and hence, I always feel inclined to love and "believe" in a man of whom it is remarked among his friends that children are very fond of him; and, for myself, it always makes me happier, and I am prouder to gain the love and confidence of one little child, than of many grown-up people, who, with more of wisdom and of worldly cunning, possess so much less of the innocence and simple love which render little children so dear to God and man. Hence, too, I conclude that Pere Felix must have been a good man, from the fact that I loved him dearly almost as soon as I knew him, and that the longer I knew him the more dearly I loved him. In a day or two my father and I returned his visit. He lived in a beautiful little cottage close to his church. I thought his church was very pretty, too; only I remember that I wondered very much what made it so unlike to ours, and what was the meaning of the lamp which was hanging before the altar, and why, when we went into the church together, Pere Felix knelt down to say his prayers, although no service was going on so far as I could see. I remember also, that there was a larger figure of




the lady and the child standing on a pedestal near the altar, and that although the lady was dressed in a very beautiful satin dress, with a great many jewels, I did not like the statue half so well as the picture which was hanging over my little bed at home. Perhaps, to some the record of these simple childish thoughts of mine may seem foolish and scarcely worth the trouble of penning, but they are golden memories to me, they are amongst the most vivid and most cherished of the recollections of my childish days, and hence I pen them down; and also because they may perchance give a clue to the solution of some things to be narrated in this little history, and which it might otherwise be difficult, and almost impossible to understand. I remember, too, that as soon as we were on our way home, I asked my father the meaning of these things; and, that either he did not know, or, which I dare say was more likely, did not wish to explain to me; for spite of my many questions and my childish curiosity, I was able to gain but very little information from him.

From this time forward scarcely a day passed in which a visit did not take place between us and the Curé. I think that he and my father enjoyed one anothers society very much, as was but natural, since they were probably the only two really educated men in the little village. Pere Felix placed his library at the disposal of my father, who did not fail to avail himself of the generous offer, as my frequent visits to the good

priest's house amply testified. I very soon began to pick up the language, and I need not say that I relished my visits to the dear old man none the less when I became able to hold little fragmentary conversations with him. After a while, for we remained in the South of France nearly two years, I became able to converse in French without any difficulty, and many a pleasant hour I spent in guileless talk with my venerable friend. He never spoke to me, I remember, directly about my religion, but he said much to me about being a good child, and loving God very dearly, and then, he said, God would bless me with his holy light in His own due time. I used now and then, but not very often, to kneel down before him as I saw the French children do, and I am sure that I felt a better child after his hand had been laid upon my head. My father never endeavoured to prevent my intercourse with Pere Felix; but, I remember very well, that he became more than ever exact and careful with me in regard to my little prayers; and whilst I never heard him utter a word in any way unkind or harsh concerning the religion of Pere Felix and the villagers amongst whom we lived, he very often reminded me that our religion was not the same as theirs, and that we must be as faithful to our own creed as they were. Sunday was always a very weary day to me, for there was no Protestant church within a very long distance, and my father and I had to remain at home all the morning. Several times I pleaded very hard to

be allowed to go with our host and hostess and their laughing merry children to Pere Felix's little church; but my father was so serious in his look and voice when he refused me what I asked, that I seldom proposed my petition, although I know that I watched their retreating forms with something very near akin to envy. We often used to stroll down to the house of Pere Felix on the Sunday evening. I remember that at first I used to be a little shocked to find the venerable old man sitting in his arm-chair watching the villagers dancing on the green before his door; but by degrees this wore away, and although I had some kind of an idea in my mind which prevented me from joining in their diversion, even supposing that my father would have allowed me to do so, still, they looked so happy and so innocent, and the presence of the grey-headed gentle priest gave such a sanction to the amusement which had at first shocked my childish prejudices, that I became quite reconciled to it, at least so far as our humble neighbours were concerned; and, while my father and the Curé chatted, and perhaps smoked a cigar, I sat at their feet and laughed and clapped my hands, and, take it altogether, enjoyed myself very much.

And thus two very happy years flitted away. My health was now quite restored, in fact, I was stronger than I had ever been before, and I was almost sorry when one day my father informed me that it it was time for us to return to our old



home in Yorkshire. I was really sorry to part from my dear old friend, Pere Felix. When I went to say "good bye," the dear old man seemed quite as sorry as myself that the time had come to part. I knelt before him, and my father made no objection to it, although he was present at the time. The old man laid his hand upon my head, and in his own sweet voice, which sounded all the sweeter from the fact that it stones were trembling with emotion, begged of the good God to bless me and make me a comfort to my widowed father's heart. I saw my father turn away to hide his tears as the old man uttered the words of the blessing, and, raising me from my knees, pressed me tenderly to his bosom. Then more adieus, more loving words and prayers, and I had seen my last of Pere Felix, whose memory is even now green in my heart, though I never saw him again.

I have kissed my dear picture for the last time, taken a last lingering look at it and my little room—a room destined hereafter to be joined with so many holy and blessed associations in my mind—parted from my humble friends, amid many frantic exclamations of sorrow and gesticulatory movements expressive of regret and anguish, and my father and I have looked our last at the pretty village and the pretty cottage with its honest and warm-hearted inmates, in the South of France. Then, the long journey home; a stormy sea which makes me very sick; weary rides in lumbering

stage coaches; and at last, and, oh, how my heart throbs at the sight, our own dear little cottage by the side of the sea. I can scarcely see it for my blinding tears, as I leap down from the conveyance to be caught and hugged by poor old Mary, who is sobbing over me as if her heart is broken.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER our return from France, two or three years glided swiftly away in our quiet country home without the occurrence of any event worth narrating in this little history. My father and I grew more inseparable than ever. Formerly I had been a kind of plaything, so to speak, an innocent idol on which the overflowing fullness of my father's love might spend itself; but, now that I was growing up, our relative positions changed in some degree, and I naturally enough became more of a companion to him; and, whereas, formerly I had been accustomed to sit upon his knee with my arm about his neck, I now took my place with all due gravity on the opposite side of the table, or the fire, as the case might be. Often, however, even yet, I would take my seat on a cushion at his feet, and rest my face upon his knees whilst he read to me out of one of our favourite authors. I was especially fond of poetry at this period of my life, and I have many and many a time sat thus in the calm of the evening, listening to his low soft voice as he read to me, one of his hands, most probably, resting on my head the while, or, perhaps, clasped in both my own. Sometimes, as the shades of the evening closed around us, he would shut his book, and we

would sit until it grew quite dark, never thinking of calling for lights, never speaking to each other, perhaps, and yet with a perfect understanding, a perfect sympathy between us, which I cannot describe, but which was inexpressibly sweet and soothing. That I was the object of his fondest love I know full well. That he was the idol of my heart, the one being on whom all my affections centred, I am equally sure. As I have just said, I never sat upon his knee now. I seldom raised my face for him to kiss. I seldomer still told him *in words* how much I loved him, but, as we sat hand in hand in the solemn silence of the summer twilight, or, in the flickering light of the winter fire, our two souls seemed to grow into one, and heart spoke to heart with a clearness and an intensity of feeling which I am quite certain no form of words could ever have expressed. It is many a year since those large sad eyes were closed in death; but, even as I write, I seem to feel them looking into mine with all that depth of wondrous feeling with which they so often thrilled my very soul as I sat at his feet, and held his hand, and gazed upon his poor pale face, all the while shrining him in my heart as the one sole object of its fondest love—spending upon him, and him alone, all the fresh affections of my boyish love—and neither thinking nor caring the future yet to come, so long as I could hold his hand in mine, and rest my face upon his knee, and feel in my inmost heart how much he was to me, and

I to him—more, in truth, than all the world besides.

Simple memories of the happy past! Ah, bear with me, gentle reader, if I thus dwell upon them; for, as they crowd upon my brain, I forget, as I have said, the wrinkles on my brow, and the silver threads in my hair, and I cannot find in my heart to banish them all at once. Remember, too, that it is but the autumn wind stirring the dried leaves of the spring long passed away, and then you will have patience with me, and will allow it, for some brief space at least, to blow on.


I think I have said that at this period of my life I was as happy as it is possible for a boy to be. The complete seclusion in which we lived, and the constant presence of my father, secured me from all knowledge of the world and its vices. I was warm-hearted and romantic to an excess, perhaps; but as all the warmth and romance of my character spent itself upon my father, there was no great harm in it. The only drawback to my happiness was the fact, which I, young as I was, could not fail to perceive, that my father's face grew paler every day, his step more languid, and his voice more weak and gentle. The dark cloud which threatened to come between us was already on the horizon, and its presence, vague and distant as it was, filled me with a strange and fearful dread. An anguish, which I cannot describe, would pierce my very heart, as I looked up from my book, and found my father's eyes fixed

upon me with such a sad, and, above all, such an anxious look, as I could not misunderstand. I knew instinctively that he was thinking of a time, perchance not very distant, when his boy might have to walk the world alone, and no wonder if his loving heart grew sad; whilst for me, God help me, what could I do at such moments, but lay my head upon his breast, and cling to him with all the love and, I may almost say, the *fierce* affection of my soul embodied and poured out in that fond embrace. Still, he would try to shake it off, and assume a cheerfulness, which I knew he did not feel, as he spoke to me hopefully of the time to come, when he would sit, an old man, at his darling's fireside—a time, alas, which never came to him or me.

There was another drawback to my happiness, too, and it was this:—Up to this time I had made but little progress in my education, properly so called. My studies, which I had pursued entirely under my father's direction, had been of a very desultory character; and, beyond a certain knowledge of literature, a taste, probably, more cultivated than that of most boys of my age, and a certain talent for composition, I may say that I was wholly uneducated. I had no knowledge of those branches of learning, which are both useful and absolutely necessary for those who have to fight their way through the world by their own endeavours. Although my father had never spoken to me in direct language, I knew well

enough that such would be my lot, and hence it was evident that it was high time for me to commence my education in earnest. Now, as we were not rich enough to engage a private tutor, and as my father declared himself unable to direct my studies any longer, the only resource left was for me to enter some public school, in order to finish my education. Since our return from France my father had often hinted at this to me, but the very idea of a separation from him was so utterly painful to me, and I had shown my pain so clearly when the matter was mentioned, that he had ceased to press it on me. Now, however, it could be no longer neglected or passed over; and my father began to urge the subject upon me with a persistence which I could no longer withstand. When I protested that it would break my heart to be separated from him, he begged of me so earnestly, even so humbly, to submit for his sake, asking me whether I did not believe that he would feel the separation more than I should, but adding that he was prepared to undergo it all for my sake, and because it was absolutely necessary for my good, that I was fain to submit, although the thought never became one whit the less bitter; and had the matter been left to me, I firmly believe that I should have sacrificed education, future prospects, and everything else, rather than leave my father's side for a single day.

Fortunately for me, better counsels prevailed. After many tears and remonstrances on my part,



after much coaxing and loving entreaty from my father, and after numberless enquiries and consultations, it was finally determined that I should enter as a boarder in the house of Dr. Searchall, a gentleman who kept a boarding school some forty miles away from us, and who had the reputation of being a good teacher, and at the same time a worthy, kind old man, who looked upon his pupils as his children. I believe, however, the principal recommendation of his school, in our eyes, was the fact that it was so near our old home, and that we should be within such a short distance of each other. Once that our determination was formed, all was bustle and preparation for the departure from home, which I need scarcely say was a great epoch in my life. Poor old Mary shed many tears at the prospect, but she bustled about, nevertheless, most vigorously, and everything was ready, even to the packing of my trunk, two or three days before the one fixed for my departure.

CHAPTER V.

THE eve of my departure came at last, and my father and I sat with sorrowful hearts, hand in hand, by the side of the open window—for it was in the middle of the summer that I was to leave home. We were both full of the approaching separation, and but few words passed between us. I felt my father's grasp grow tighter on the hand he held between both his own, and I heard his heavy sighs, but that was all; and yet, in truth, no more was needed to let me know what thoughts were passing through his faithful, loving heart.

The room was growing dark with the shadows of the summer night, when at last my father broke the painful silence, and spoke to me in a low and trembling voice, and with such a strange and sadly mournful tone as I had never heard him use before.

"Arthur, my own darling boy," I heard him whisper rather than speak, "come, and put your arm about my neck, and lay your head on my breast, and listen to me till I try and tell you a very sad and sorrowful tale, one which the time has come for you to hear, and for me to tell."

I went over to him at once and placed myself upon his knee as he desired. The room, as I have

said, was very dark, but there was light enough for me to see that his pale face was even paler than usual; nay, it looked absolutely ghastly in the dim and shadowy light of the summer night, and his cheek was cold as death as he bent down and laid it on my own for a few brief seconds ere he began the story which I was longing to hear, and which I never afterwards forgot. I think it was *burnt* into my soul, so to speak; for although, thanks be to God, I humbly trust that the angry feelings and the bitter fierce resentment which that story awoke in my young heart have long since been laid to rest, still, the narrative itself is as fresh in my soul, even to this very day, as it was when I sat upon his knee and heard it from his own dear lips, listening to the story of his sorrows and his wrongs till my soul was all on fire with hot and savage anger against those who had heaped them on him—listening till I was fain to find some little relief for my fearful grief in sobs and bitter cries, which all his soothing, gentle words of peace, and love and full forgiveness could scarcely quell or put to rest.

“Arthur, my boy, my only comfort,” he began, in his sad, low voice, his hand trembling strangely too, as it held mine, “I should have told you this story long ago, and yet, God knows, I have never been able to summon courage enough to do it. I have shrunk too, my darling,” he went on, “from allowing even the faintest outline of the fearful shadow which has cast such a blight upon my own

weary lot to fall upon your fresh young heart. Would to God that I and my sorrows might have gone down to the grave together, and that for you there might have been nothing but sunshine and happiness. But this may not be. This sad story must be told you in order that you may understand from it the prospects which are before you—in order that you may understand how it is that he, who would willingly shed his heart's best blood for you, his own, his only comfort, is able to do so little for you in a worldly point of view. I care not what the world may think or say of me; but I could never bear," he went on, his voice faltering more and more till I could scarcely catch the concluding words of the sentence, "that my darling should have one less loving thought of me when I am gone, should have one reproach, however slight, to heap upon my grave, should ever be able to think that there was anything, which fondest father might do for most darling child, which I did not do for you, my boy, my best, my only treasure, the one sole object in this world I love or care for. No! I have borne much, God only knows how much, but that I could never, never bear."

His voice became choked with sobs. I put my other arm about his neck, and drew his poor pale face down to mine, and did my best to kiss away his tears. He seemed to make a great effort, and in a few moments he went on with his narrative.

"Although we are now so poor, my child," he

continued, "I was the eldest son of a country gentleman of title and of considerable wealth. He had one other child, my only brother. He was a stern, severe man, and the days of my childhood were gloomy and sad, heaven knows. My mother, whom I recollect as a pale, quiet, yet gentle and loving woman, died, when we were young. Young as I was at the time, I remember, nevertheless, often thinking that she had been worn out by my father's harshness and unbending severity. At all events, the only ray of sunshine that ever shone across my childish days was extinguished when she died, for she loved me dearly. I know, in her own timid half-shrinking way; and thenceforward there was nothing for me but sorrow and silent suffering. After she had been laid in the vault of the old village church, my father grew more stern and severe than ever. It was but seldom that we children were admitted to his presence, and when it happened that we were, he was so cold and harsh, he repressed with such severity our childish gaiety and innocent flow of spirits, and repelled with such evident indifference any manifestations of affection which we might offer, that it was a positive relief when we were summoned away by the servant who attended us. Whatever little love or interest he manifested, was bestowed upon my brother. For me he had nothing but indifference, coldness, and neglect. I don't know why this was so," my father went on, I listening the while with wrapt attention.

"I never knew, and now I never seek to discover the motives by which he was governed. For many a year I did my best to love him. For many a year I did my best to win his love by such little manifestations of affection as I dared to offer him in my timid frightened way. Indifference, cruel words, and sometimes even more cruel blows, were the only return with which I met; and what wonder if, after a time, I began to shun his presence, as much as possible; and *then*, I think his indifference grew into positive dislike. If I ran up to him, when I saw him walking in the garden and timidly strove to put my hand into his, he sometimes repelled me with his indifference to my proffered love, oftener still with harsh and bitter words. When I avoided his presence altogether, he sometimes flogged me with his riding whip till I was half mad with pain, more than half mad with the burning sense of wrong and cruel injustice under which I was suffering. What could I do? I think my heart would have turned to stone but for the never-failing sympathy, the tender love, and soothing words of a good man who was our private tutor. To me he was all that my own father might have been. His situation in a family like ours could not have been a pleasant one, and I am convinced that he put up with many sufferings in order to be near us, myself especially. When smarting from the blows which my father would inflict upon me for the smallest cause, often without any cause at all, it was to this

good man that I would run, and sob and cry myself to sleep in his gentle arms, his voice soothing me all the while with whispered words of patience, resignation, and hope of better things. I know not what arts my brother used, or how he managed to gain a hold upon his father's affections, but it is quite certain that he was my father's favourite, and that he was often sent for to keep him company in his walks, or after dinner, whilst I was left unheeded in my own lonely room. As I have already said, I never knew why my father loved me so little. I only know that I did my best to win his love, and that I failed, failed miserably, failed, perhaps, as child never failed before—failed, as, I pray God, poor child may never fail again."

Again my father's voice grew hoarse with sobs, and again I drew his face down to mine, and kissed away his tears, and clung still closer to his noble, loving heart.


"After a while," he went on, "my tutor informed me that my father had determined to send me to a public school. My brother was to remain at home and continue his studies under the direction of the good man who had been such a true friend to me. I need scarcely say that I received the intelligence with joy and gladness. It was not in the nature of things that I should be sorry to escape from such a home. I suppose my feelings must have shown themselves in my face when I went to take leave of my father, for, after hold-

ing my hand coldly in his own for an instant, he suddenly threw it from him, and turned frowning away. I left home, and I never saw my father's face again until I returned from school, my education thus far, at least, being finished.

"I was nineteen," my father continued, "when I returned home. I had been absent more than five years. I had during that time occasionally received a short, curt note from my father in answer to the letters which were periodically dispatched from the school. It was all that I expected; and, hence, I was neither chilled nor disappointed. The boyish affections of my heart had been poured out upon the companions with whom I had mixed. I knew that my father was indifferent to them, and I never sought now to force them upon him; but it was with something very like dismay that I re-entered the house which had no recollections for me but those of coldness, of cruelty, and neglect. I found my father looking very old and feeble, but stern and severe as ever. I think he was hardly prepared for the change in my appearance, for I was then in the very bloom of my youth," my father continued, his voice faltering more and more, "for I saw a sudden flush pass over his face as I entered his room; and he seemed to shake my hand more warmly than I had ever remembered him to have done before. My brother—who, I may remark, was barely a year younger than myself—was sitting by his side when I entered. I don't know whether it was the effect

of his secluded life, but it struck me that my brother looked pale and thin, and somewhat careworn; and it seemed to me that there was an air of reserve about him, as he held out his hand to me, which did not impress me favourably, although I was prepared to love him with all the affection of my ardent nature.

“The next two years dragged wearily, oh, how wearily along. The momentary tenderness which my father had seemed to feel for me was as quickly extinguished, and he was harder, sterner than ever. I know not why he kept me at home, and yet he refused to let me go away. When I begged to be allowed to go to Oxford or Cambridge, like other young men in my rank of life, he refused to provide me with the means. When I asked him to let me, at least, embrace some profession, he sternly bade me remember that I was his eldest son, and the inheritor of his title. My soul chafed within me at the unnatural restraint which was placed upon me; and yet, what could I do? I had no companion of my own age, for I could not call my brother by that name. For days together I scarcely saw him, as he seldom left my father's room, an apartment which I was as seldom allowed to enter. When we chanced to meet, he showed so little inclination to unbend from his silent, cold reserve, so little inclination to interchange those nameless little offices of love which were so natural between us, that I was completely frozen, and after a while ceased from intruding on him. And yet,




when circumstances obliged us to meet, as sometimes happened, he was so scrupulously polite, so completely inoffensive, that I could find no fault with him, could point out no absolute shortcoming, or want of courtesy in his mode of acting towards me. Whether all this time he were playing me false, and systematically abusing his influence with my father in order to damage me, is more than I can say. If it were so," continued my father, in a solemn voice, "may God forgive him, even as fully as I do. May God never suffer him or his to know the sorrow and the pain which he has heaped on this poor broken heart of mine."

As my father had gone on with his sad story, a thousand fierce and angry feelings had been awakened in my young soul. I had striven hard to keep them under control, lest I might disturb him in his narrative; but when he came to this part, I could restrain them no longer. My heart seemed to grow all on fire, as I listened, in the thickening twilight, to the low sad voice which in truth was full of sorrow, but in whose tones I discerned no note of anger or resentment against those who had cast so fearful a blight upon his opening life. As I thought of him, so good, so gentle, and so noble; as I thought of the fathomless love of his great heart, and who knew it so well as I—and how it had been trifled with, how it had been cast away and trampled upon as a thing not worth the having, by those to whom it ought to have been more dear than any treasure in the world beside;

as I contrasted the never-failing love, the never-ceasing care and watchfulness which had been so lavished on my own boyish days, with the bitter wrongs, the cold indifference, and the heedless cruelty which had been his lot, great sobs came rising in my throat till I was nearly choked, and all my blood seemed boiling in my veins with very rage and bitter indignation towards those who had thus used the darling of my heart. I drew my arms from round his neck, I sprang suddenly to my feet, I clenched my hands, and, raising them above my head, cried out in a voice which sounded strangely even to myself, that he might, indeed, forgive them, but that I never, never would. He had me in his arms in a moment, and was soothing me with soft and gentle words, telling me that vengeance must have no part in us, but must be left to Him whom we every day prayed to forgive us our trespasses even as we forgave them who had trespassed against us. He spoke to me, too, of One who when He was reviled, reviled not again, but delivered Himself up to them that treated Him unjustly; but, spite of all that he could say to me, it was some time before he could succeed in soothing me, and in making me promise to forgive them from the bottom of my heart—to return them good for evil if it should ever be in my power to do it. I promised him at last, but only when he begged it of me for his own dear sake; and then, drawing me closer still to him, he resumed his mournful tale.

“At last I came of age,” my father continued, “and our gloomy old home presented the first appearance of gaiety which I ever remembered to have seen in it. It was seldom indeed that a visitor crossed our threshold, but on this occasion the neighbouring gentry responded to the invitation which had been forwarded them, and once more entered our door. Our old family plate was burnished up, the furniture, so long unused, was uncovered, and all the resources of our house were called into requisition on this rare occasion. My father entered the room where our guests were assembled, leaning on my arm, and for once, at least, I seemed to be recognized by him as his son and heir. My brother, too, appeared to throw off his reserve. He was profuse in his congratulations with me on attaining my majority, spoke of the necessity of seeing more company in our old home, and of again assuming the family influence in the county, which for the last five years had been dwindling away, till it seemed as if our name were hardly known. I listened with delight, flattering myself that brighter days were about to dawn upon me. Poor, foolish boy! I only deluded myself with an empty phantom. In a few days the old gloom seemed to fall again across our hearth, the old shadow reigned triumphant, and I was chafing more impatiently than ever under the galling chains which bound me. With the knowledge that I was a man, with the feelings of a man thrilling through every vein in



my body, with all the natural aspirings of my mind and will in full play, my father continued to treat me like a child, and seemed to expect that I should submit without a murmur to the intolerable bondage in which he so unrelentingly retained me. My soul revolted against the unreasonable servitude, and yet, I took care to do nothing which could offend him, or provoke him to anger against me. When I was at home I had no one to speak to, no one to keep me company, no one with whom to spend one hour in rational and innocent amusement. If I ventured to spend a few hours abroad, at the house of any of the neighbouring gentry, who were all very kind to me, I was almost certain on my return to receive through my brother some stinging message or other from my father to the effect that he did not approve of my proceedings, and that it was his desire that I should refrain from such visits. I never knew, I never could conceive," my father repeated, "why he acted thus towards me, why he thus persisted in treating me like a child, in driving me, almost in spite of myself, into open rebellion against him and the merciless authority which he exercised over me. Whether he were influenced by some secret dislike to me, which he could not, or, which he did not strive to overcome, or whether it arose from some overstrained idea of his own authority, or whether some hidden enemy were continually plotting against me, God alone knows. I only know," my father

continued, with his sad, sad voice, "that, spite of all my endeavours, he would not be pleased with me, would not treat me like a man, would not break one link of the galling chain which was almost chafing me into madness. I felt in my soul that all this could not last much longer. The end came sooner than I expected, and in a way of which I had never dreamed. The God who sees us both, my darling," he went on, pressing me all the while convulsively to his heart, "knows how often I have thanked him on my bended knees that the consummation was brought about by no fault of mine, that the fearful ending of all this cannot be laid to my charge."

He was growing terribly excited now, and his whole frame shook with the emotion which he was evidently suppressing by a strong effort. The room was almost too dark for me to see his face, even if I had endeavoured to do so; but it seemed to me as if I could almost *feel* how ghastly pale it was, as once again I drew it to my own, as once again I pressed it to my lips, as, by a hundred little nameless offices of love, I strove to make him understand how infinitely the bond of love which bound him to me, was being strengthened and confirmed by all that he was telling me. But I did not speak a word. My heart was all so full of grief, of sorrow, and of saddest sympathy, that if I had endeavoured to give utterance to a single word, I must infallibly have broken out into cries and bitter wailings; and, if it had cost me my life

I think I would have died rather than disturb him now, rather than draw attention to myself or interfere by slightest act of mine with the overflowing fullness of his sacred sorrow.

There was a solemn pause, and it was a few minutes ere he went on. Meanwhile the room grew darker still with the increasing shadows of the growing night, and not a sound disturbed its solemn stillness save my father's heavy sighs, and the echo of my own tremulous and suppressed breathing.

At length he took one of his hands away from my neck, and I knew instinctively that he was passing it wearily across his aching brow. When he spoke again his voice was fainter than before, scarcely louder than a whisper, but it was loud enough, God knows, for what he had to say.

"A few words more, my darling," he went on, "and I have finished. It was about six months after I attained my majority that the end came. Wearied out with the dreadful monotony of our solitary house, I had one day accepted the invitation of a neighbour to spend a few hours at his house. There were many young people like myself assembled, and it was long since I had spent so pleasant an evening. I slept at my friend's house, and returned home next morning. I went up to the library for some purpose or other. I had only been there a few moments when the door opened, and, to my surprise, my father entered the room. His face was deadly

pale, and, as I glanced hurriedly at him, I could see that he was shaking with fierce, ungovernable passion. He carried a heavy riding whip in his hand, and, closing the door behind him, he advanced across the room with hasty steps to where I stood. Without giving me the opportunity of saying a single word, he poured out upon me a torrent of invective which was as fierce as it was unjust. It lashed my soul into a perfect fury. The burning wrongs of all the bygone years went rushing through my blood, until the bare remembrance of them seemed to set me all on fire; and, for the moment at least, I think, I must have been mad. In his wild fury he raised his heavy whip to strike me; and, as he did so, merciful God, I clenched my fists to fell him to the ground. I rushed upon him, but God preserved me from the fearful crime. No, I could not have struck any old man, much less him. I only snatched the whip from out his hand, broke it across my knee, and threw it out of the open window; and then I sat me down, and laid my face upon the table, and sobbed and cried as full-grown men alone can cry. Oh! if he had but gone away even then, and left me to myself. But, no; he followed me to where I sat. In a voice, which was scarcely audible from passion, he repeated all his foul invective. He called me spendthrift and prodigal, which, God knows, I was not. I retorted; reminding him in withering words of all my blasted hopes, of all the suffering and un-

merited wrong which he had heaped upon me from my earliest days even until then. Again he seemed as if he would strike me in his fury. I only folded my arms upon my breast, in the conscious strength of my early manhood, and looked him in the face as he advanced upon me. Perhaps he saw that in my eyes which told him I was dangerous; but, at all events, he drew back a step or two, and contented himself with ordering me to leave his house, and take his bitterest curse with me wherever I might go. I stood, holding the back of a chair in order to try to calm myself, till the last word of the withering curse, which seemed to blast with its every syllable my young life, had fallen upon my ear, till I had seen him drop from very exhaustion, pale, and foaming at the mouth, into the nearest seat, and then I turned my back upon him, and went forth, a stranger and an outcast from my father's house. I never entered it again, till I was summoned to the side of the bed where he lay dying. It was only three months after he had driven me forth, and I was still in the vicinity at the house of a neighbouring gentleman, who had always been very kind to me, and whose proffered hospitality I had not shrunk from accepting as frankly as it was offered. When the news was brought to me that my father was dying, I hurried away with all speed, for I was unwilling that he should leave the world without imparting his forgiveness to me for aught in which I had offended him. My

brother met me at the door and conducted me into the room of the dying old man. As we entered it, he opened his eyes and recognized me at once. He fixed his glazing eyes upon me with a look which I could not understand, and yet which pierced me to the soul, it was so piteous, so imploring, so sad. I understood its meaning well enough after he was gone. I hurried over to his bed and knelt down by its side. I took his cold, clammy hand in mine, and, in the anguish of my soul, I begged of him to pardon and forgive me all in which I had unwittingly offended him. He had been struck down suddenly by paralysis and had never spoken since the fit came on him; but his eyes met mine with that same sad pleading look which I could no longer misunderstand. 'Yes, father,' I pleaded passionately, 'forgive me, for God's sake, even as I forgive you from the bottom of my heart. Let there be peace at last between us.' Again he looked into my eyes with a look which seemed to say that he had injured me beyond redemption, and again I called my God to witness how fully and completely I forgave him, how earnestly I craved and sought his dying blessing. As I spoke thus, with hot and earnest words, still kneeling by the side of his bed, a calm soft smile played over his features for a moment, and he beckoned me to rise and kiss him. I rose to my feet, and, bending over him, kissed him on the face twice or thrice, and as I did so, whispered to him once again words of peace, of love and full

forgiveness. I saw him try to raise his hand in order to draw me to him. I took his wasted form in both my arms, and laid his face upon my breast, for I saw that the end was come. A moment more and I felt him grow rigid in my grasp. Two or three great sobs which seemed to rend asunder the tie that bound his body to his soul, and then a solemn shadow stole across his sad pale face, and I laid him gently and reverently back upon his pillow, knowing that all the world was nothing to him now, that his soul was already standing in the presence of its God.

“Later on I went up to the room where he was laid. It was hung with costly velvet, emblazoned with the armorial bearings of our family. I heeded it not, still less did I heed or care for the title which was now my own. I gazed for a long, long time at his marble face, gazed, indeed, till I could see no longer for my blinding tears, and then I knelt down by the side of his bier, and thought of all that might have been between us two and had not been; thought of all the love I could have lavished on him if he would have let me; thought of him as I had seen him last, when the longing look had met my own—when the dying smile had passed across his face, as I had breathed my hurried words of love and peace into his ear—and *then* I rose, and in the pale dim light of the waxen tapers, gazed into his face still once again; and when I stooped to kiss him on the brow for the last time ere I turned away,

I thank my God that there was nothing in my heart but peace and love—nothing but tender thoughts and soft and chastened memories of the poor old man who had passed away.”

Again my father paused and passed his hand across his brow, and again I strove to draw him nearer to my heart.

“We laid him in the vault with his fathers,” he went on, “and when all was over the family lawyer proceeded to read his will. As his eldest son I had, as a matter of course, taken charge of everything, my brother making no opposition, but deferring to my wishes in every respect. Perhaps, he knew what was coming and therefore bided his time as well he might. The will was short, and dated the day after he had driven me from his house with his bitter curse upon my head. With the exception of a few small legacies, he bequeathed the whole of his property, without reserve or condition, to my brother. To me he left his title (which he could not deprive me of) and a shilling! The lawyer read the document in a hesitating voice as if he felt ashamed of his own part in such a vile proceeding, and then handed it to me with an apologetic air, that I might examine it, and assure myself of its authenticity. My soul was sick within me, and the writing swam before my eyes till I could scarcely decipher the characters. Still I could see it plainly enough to know that it was perfectly valid, and I handed it back mechanically to him. I was so stunned by the

blow that as yet there was no room for any other sensation in my soul. It was only when my eyes fell upon my brother that the angry passions of my nature rose in full rebellion. I saw, or I fancied that I saw, in his face a knowledge of all this, a look of quiet and subdued triumph, which stung me to the quick. It was almost more than I could do to keep myself from rushing on him, from killing him as he stood before me pale and trembling as he saw my wrath, but with the same air of secret triumph showing itself through all. As I listened to the commonplace condolence which he, he, whom I believed to have robbed me of my inheritance, presumed to offer me, it was almost more than I could do to keep myself from answering him with fierce and angry curses; but we had had enough of curses in our family, God knows, and I forced myself to smother the bitter imprecations which were swelling in my throat. But I could not take the hand he proffered me. No! I could not bring myself to that. As he held it out to me, I folded both my own upon my breast, and turned my back upon him. There was something which I wished to say, I know, but my throat seemed parched and all on fire, my tongue refused to form the words, and, as I turned to leave the room, I felt it swimming around me in a strange and fearful way. I remember, even then, trying to steady myself until I should, at least, be outside the room, lest he might see how weak I was—how

much I felt the blow he had inflicted on me—but it was no use. It seemed to me as if the room were slipping from beneath my feet. I strove to catch a chair but failed. I saw my brother and the lawyer rush over to me with pale and frightened faces. I knew the blood was gushing from my nostrils and my mouth. I remember that I gave one wild cry, and then I remember no more.”

Oh! how I clung to him now!

“I believe I had a brain fever,” he went on. “When I recovered my consciousness I found myself in bed in my father’s—no, my brother’s house. The first dim thought that forced itself upon me was, that I must get up at once and go away; and then I found that I could not even raise my hand, I was so weak, and all I could do was to give a weary sigh at my own sad impotence. The second thought that flashed across my brain was, that I was a beggar, and that it would have been better for me to have died in my sickness than to have recovered to live the life that was before me.”

I think he must have felt the reproachful motion of my hand, for he added quickly, that he did not think so *now*; that now he had a treasure dearer to his heart and love than all the treasures of the world besides, and, bending down, he kissed me on the face, and gently wiped away the tears which were flowing unrestrainedly down it.

“I learnt,” he continued, “that my brother had left as soon as I was pronounced out of danger. Whither he went I know not. What became of

him I know as little. I have never seen his face since that night when I fell at his feet in a pool of my own life's blood. All I know is that he lives, for he regularly draws the rent of the estates, but to the best of my belief, he has never since visited the old family mansion; and, indeed, he would scarcely venture to do that. Independently of the memories which it must have for him, public opinion would be too strong even for him to brave, and I know that there was but one opinion in the county in regard to his conduct towards me. My heart was very bitter towards him for many a year," my father added softly, "but I hope, please God, that now I can forgive him; that now I am at peace with all the world—at peace even with him.

"As soon as I was strong enough I left that house of misery and of suffering, never to enter its portals again. I was sadly shattered," he went on. "I have never been myself since that heavy illness; and I know full well, my darling, and it is this thought which nearly kills me, as I think of you, that my hold upon the world is of a very frail, uncertain tenure. Never fear, my boy," he added, as I wept and moaned upon his breast, "that He who is the Father of the fatherless will forget the Father's part to you, if it should please Him to take this poor weary form of mine to its eternal home. If it were not for you, and your dear sake, oh! darling of my heart," he passionately went on, "I had long since besought of Him

to take me to that home, to free me from my sorrow and care, to give my weary, weary soul its comfort and its rest. Nay, nay, my boy," he remonstrated, as I broke out afresh into loud and bitter wailing at his words, "leave me in the hands of God, even as I leave you with overflowing confidence to Him who will be more than a father to you, whenever it shall please Him to take your earthly father to Himself.

"The world was all before me," he continued. "Broken in health, and utterly unfit from this cause, and from my unfinished education, for any calling or employment, I should have found myself an absolute beggar, had I not been master of a few hundred pounds, which I inherited from my mother. After much deliberation with myself as to the best mode of investing this sum, I determined to purchase an annuity with it. I did so, and retired to this humble and secluded cottage, where I have dwelt ever since. I need scarcely say that I never assumed the empty title which was my sole inheritance; nay, I even changed my name that none might guess who I really was. It was to this humble home I brought your mother," he went on, his voice growing ineffably tender in its tones. "It was in happier times, and when brilliant prospects were before me, that I sought and won her love. When the clouds closed over me I would have freed her from her plighted troth; but, spurning every other offer,

she told me, in the fullness of her faithful heart, that my lot was her lot, and that my path was the one which she must tread too. When I spoke to her of all that she must leave, of all the sacrifices which she must make, she did but plead the harder with me to be allowed to share my humble home; reminding me, with many a blush of maiden modesty, that our fidelity was surely to be none the less because it had pleased God to visit us with sorrow and affliction. She came to me my equal in this world's wealth; my superior—oh! a thousand, thousand times my superior—in everything besides. For three short years she made the sun to shine upon my path; she soothed away my cares, and blessed me with the priceless blessing of her faithful, never-failing love; and then it pleased my God to smite me yet again, to bow me to the very earth, to make me feel as much of bitter anguish as a mortal man may bear and live. My darling drooped and faded before my, very eyes, and when the flowers of early spring were putting forth their buds, she went away to God, leaving me with no other tie to bind me to this weary world but you, my boy, the treasure of my widowed heart. But for this I could have laid my head beside her own, and slept that sleep which knows no waking, and have thanked my God my wretched course was run at last. But I had you to live for," he went on, his voice so low that I could scarcely catch its trembling accents, "and

when I had laid my poor darling in her early grave, I tried for her dear sake to live, at least a little longer, in what has been to me, in very truth, a world of sorrow and of care.

“And now, my child, my tale is told. I have told it to you in order that you may see the lot that is before you. My annuity is just enough to support us, and it dies with me. I will so contrive as to give you a good education, and then, my boy, I have done all that I can do, and your future is in your own hands. I pray that God may spare me to see you all that I could wish that you might be. I humbly pray my God that when the grave has closed above my worn-out form, my boy may never have cause to think of him who has passed away, except with thoughts of love, of peace, and never-dying tenderness—to think of him as of one who would have shed his own heart’s blood to purchase for his child the happiness that has been denied himself.”

The mournful tones of his low sad voice seemed to melt away in the solemn stillness of that summer night, as once again he drew me to his breast, and laid his face, all wet with tears, upon my own. I wound my arms about his neck, and called upon God to witness how I took him to my heart, to shrine him in its love, to watch, and tend, and care for him through every coming year, even as he had loved and watched and cared for me, the idol and the treasure of his stricken life, through those that

were past; called God to witness, in all the fullness and the generous instincts of my young soul, how earnestly I would labour to be all that he could wish, how truly and how faithfully I vowed that never thought, nor word, nor act of mine, should add one tittle to his heavy load of sorrow and of pain.

CHAPTER VI.

WE have all heard a great deal about Yorkshire schools, I imagine, and what dens of cruelty and starvation they are, places where helpless boys are "taken in and done for," in the fullest sense of the word, by savage masters and still more savage matrons of the "Squeers" genus. I suppose the writers who have furnished us with these stories had all possible foundation for assertions which we should naturally find it very difficult to believe; and I am neither in a position, nor have I any intention of calling their statements into question. I have not been employed as special pleader for the Yorkshire schoolmasters, and, even if the distinction had been offered me, I have no reason for supposing that I should have accepted it. All I have to say on the matter is, let every one speak as he finds, and for me, I can truly say, that I have nothing but pleasant memories of the Yorkshire school for which I took my departure on the appointed morning. I remember the old place well—a large straggling house, which looked as if it had been built at half a dozen different times, and, I dare say, this was the fact; the long schoolroom with its Norman arched doorway—the dormitory windows with their iron bars,

which gave those apartments rather a prison-like appearance, and which (I mean the bars) might just as well have been taken away in as far as they were of any practical use. The play-ground extended from the school to the public road, from which we were shut out by a couple of gates, with walls running on either side, quite low enough to be easily scaled by adventurous spirits bent on illicit visits to the village tart-shop, or even *proh pudor*, to the village house of public entertainment for man and beast. I must say that this latter feat was never attempted except by those turbulent and dreadnought fellows whom you will find in every school, as in every body of men, however collected; and, as they were generally found out (and whenever they were, the old doctor gave them very ample cause to remember the fact), these visits were of very rare occurrence. Not so with our sallies to the dwelling of Mrs. Downham, a venerable matron who was tart manufacturer in ordinary, and general purveyor of "good stuff" to the young gentlemen of Dr. Searchall's establishment. On one fixed day in each week the old lady was allowed to bring her delicacies into the play-ground, and we, having previously drawn our week's allowance of pocket money from the doctor, had full permission to feast on the aforesaid delicacies in as far as our somewhat limited means permitted us. This weekly festival, however, was by no means sufficient for those whose appetites craved for more frequent indulgence,

and whose private means warranted them in the indulgence of these unrecognised desires; hence, as the old lady resided within a very short distance of the school, and, as it was well-known that she had a constant supply of delicacies on hand, private excursions, altogether independent of, and in defiance to, the doctor's authority were of no rare occurrence. The distance was only a few hundred yards, and a stone wall of moderate height, but quite high enough to conceal a small boy, ran by the side of the road the whole way between the gate of our play-ground and the mansion of Mrs. Downham. The "modus agendi" was very simple. The first thing was to find a "small boy" of sufficient natural intrepidity, or whose courage could be brought up to the required point by means of bribes, &c., &c., to undertake the foraging expedition. It was generally not very difficult to find one of this description. Having received all the commissions which he was able or willing to undertake, he watched a favourable opportunity, and when the back of the assistant-master, whose duty it was to attend us in the play-ground, was turned, he darted off like an arrow, under shelter of the friendly wall. It was easy enough to start, but by no means so easy to effect his re-entrance into the play-ground unperceived; sometimes the assistant-master, who was by no means unprepared for those escapades, would miss a little fellow from the play-ground; and, guessing very well from the anxiety which, try to hide it as we

would, we could not help exhibiting, what was in the wind, would keep a very sharp eye upon the gate, and manage by dint of clever manœuvres and unexpected turns to defeat all the system of signals by which we endeavoured to convey to the anxious youth, who was hiding himself behind the stone pillars of the gate, that the road was clear, and pounce upon the unfortunate wight at the very moment of his entrance. At other times the doctor would most perversely take a turn down his garden which ran side by side with our play-ground; and when he had arrived at the bottom of it, instead of turning back again, would proceed, our hearts beating most anxiously all the while, to look leisurely over the wall, and thus descry the culprit scudding along as fast as his legs could carry him, and as the load which he bore permitted. The capture in either case was inevitable, and the supremacy of law and order triumphantly vindicated by the confiscation of the smuggled goods and the exemplary punishment of the unsuccessful smuggler, whose dismal yells and woful supplications for mercy, whilst undergoing the said punishment, touched our hearts in more ways than one. We had lost our money—we had lost the articles purchased by our own hard savings—and compensation must be made, for this was a point of honour with us, to the unfortunate youngster for the sufferings and corporal pains which he had undergone for our sakes and in our service. We sometimes


endeavoured to provide against some of these disasters, or, at all events, to alleviate the weight of the blow by procuring our dainties on credit, as, in this case, we insisted upon the old lady, and she was far too sagacious to refuse, bearing half the loss. This system, however, had its inconveniences, for the old lady had a complicated way of keeping her accounts which was by no means satisfactory, and which it required a very acute intellect, indeed, to fathom. Day-book or ledger were words which did not enter into her vocabulary, but she kept her accounts in a much more primitive manner—by means of a piece of chalk and a painted wall. A stroke on the wall was taken to indicate a tart purchased and not paid for; and the inconvenience of running an account with Mrs. Downham consisted in this, that no boy, when settling day came, was able to reconcile his own convictions as to the number of tarts he had consumed on credit with the marks on the wall against his name. My own dealings with her were quite as complicated as those of my school-fellows, and I must say, that, do as I would, I never *could* understand her accounts, and I believe the end of it all was, that I went away from the school owing her tenpence halfpenny, which debt I forgot to discharge in the hurry of my leaving. My only consolation was the firm belief which I entertained, that the profits which she had derived from our mutual transactions were far more than sufficient to cover the debt. She enjoyed a mono-

poly in our regard; and although the portion of water to ginger employed in the manufacture of her beer was unusually large, and although it was whispered, mysteriously, amongst us that the "treacle-stick" was rolled out by the unwashed hands of her husband, a very dirty-looking old man, like all monopolists, she had her own way, and we were glad to obtain her commodities on any terms.


Directly opposite to the gate stood the village church, raised on an elevation of some feet above the road which separated it from our play-ground. It was very old and venerable, and far too large for the congregation which in my young days assembled in it. On several parts of its walls, I remember very well that the armorial bearings of the "Percy" family were carved, and to this same family, the doctor sometimes informed us, the ruined castle at the other end of the village had belonged. These ruins were of considerable extent, and although the roof had, of course, long since fallen in, the walls in those days were not in very bad condition, the arched windows being nearly all perfect. The castle was a forbidden place to us, and on the few days on which we were allowed to spend an hour or two in the village, we were especially warned against approaching even the field in which the ruins were situated. This prohibition was generally observed by most of us; but, I need scarcely add, that the castle was the very first place to which some made their

way, and the great feat of the school was, to walk all round the castle on the *top* of the ruined walls. It was a feat but rarely attempted, but, once achieved, and the reputation of the daring adventurer was established beyond all cavil. I only witnessed the scene once. For several days before one of those occasions on which we were permitted to enter the village, it was whispered about amongst a certain number of us, that Schofield would walk round the castle on that day. Accordingly, no sooner were we set at liberty, than away those who were in the secret hastened to the scene of the adventure. Schofield, a strong active lad of sixteen or so, and the leader of everything that was daring or out of order in the school, prepared for his arduous task. He threw off his coat and vest, tightened the belt about his waist, and, after shaking hands all round, proceeded to climb the walls by means of the ivy with which they were covered, until he reached the top. It was a fearful task, and I remember that my blood ran cold in my veins as I stood looking at him, wishing with all my heart that I could close my eyes, and yet impelled by a strange fascination, which I could not conquer, to keep them open. The walls could not have been much less in some parts than ninety feet in height from the ground, and, of course, were only the thickness of the wall itself in width. I need not add, that there was no protection of any kind, nor anything at which the adventurer, who essayed to traverse this

terrible path, could catch in case of accident or giddiness. When our companion had reached the top of the walls he sat down on them, resting himself for a moment, and wiping the sweat from his brow; he then cautiously raised himself to his feet, and, after waving his hand to us, began to pick his way, with cautious steps, along the uncertain path before him. We watched him with straining eyes and beating hearts. One false step, one moment's giddiness, and he would have lain a shapeless, writhing mass at our feet, and, I need not say that not a sound which might in any way distract him escaped our lips, as we watched him picking his steps along the ruined walls. Once or twice he stumbled heavily, and several stones, which he had misplaced, came rolling with a sullen thud upon the grass, and when this happened my heart beat within my breast till I could scarcely breathe. Still he kept on his way bravely, till he came to a kind of a turret, which was built in one corner, and which impeded his further progress. This turret was open in front, and, in order to complete the circuit of the walls, it was necessary to enter it on one side, traverse the interior of it, and come out on the opposite side. This was always considered the most difficult part of the undertaking, inasmuch as it was only by clinging to the wall of the turret, and swinging round by mere force, whilst one foot alone could rest upon the wall, that it could be accomplished. The exit from was even more




difficult than the entrance into this little tower, for the adventurer was obliged to come out backwards, and, whilst one foot remained in the turret to grope with the other till he felt the wall outside, and, of course, if he had for an instant relinquished the firm grasp of his hands upon the side of the turret, he must infallibly have fallen to the ground below. I remember having felt quite sick as I witnessed the efforts of our companion to make his footing sure, as he crept out of the tower in the manner I have described. It was a few seconds before he succeeded in planting his right foot upon the wall. When this was accomplished, clinging with both hands to the sides of the turret, he slowly drew his left foot out of it, and then, with a strong jerk, swung himself completely on to the wall outside, on which his right foot already rested. After this fearful exploit he stood and rested for a few minutes, and then, waving his hand to us, again continued his dangerous walk round the top of the ruined walls. He arrived safely at the place whence he had started, and commenced cautiously to descend by means of the ivy on the walls. We remained quite silent until he was within a safe distance of the ground, and then we broke into such shouts and huzzas as schoolboys alone can give. He was terribly pale when his feet once more touched the ground, and the sweat was pouring down his face, as he fell back, fainting and exhausted into our arms, as we crowded round him, and strove with each other




who should be the first to shake him by the hand. I think the whole affair had not occupied much short of an hour. As I have said, I only witnessed the feat once, and I had no desire to see it again, but I know that it was generally done at least once each "half" by some foolhardy fellow or other.

I have been insensibly led away from the church and the churchyard of which I was speaking, when the incidental mention of the old castle carried me off, and I found myself in the middle of this story before I recollected myself. The churchyard was the scene of some great battles between us and the boys of the village, which I remember very well. When the winter set in, and a good fall of snow had come, and, by way of parenthesis, I may remark, that there *were* falls of snow in those days, we used to be all alive with the expectation of one of our regular battles. Sometimes after messages of a highly inflammatory and provocative nature had been conveyed to them, oftener without waiting for any message at all, the "bumpkins," as we derisively called them, assembled in strong force in the churchyard, under the command of an experienced general. In my time, the post of honour was held by the butcher's boy, whilst Schofield took command of us. He proceeded to marshal his forces, assigning his position to each boy, that is, to each one old enough and strong enough for fighting purposes, whilst one or two scouts were despatched for the




purpose of hunting up all the little fellows, who might be hiding themselves in out-of-the way places, as they were required to manufacture the snow-balls, and make themselves generally useful in the "powder-monkey" department. We were usually ready for active operations within ten minutes of the first appearance of the "bumpkins" on the scene of action. There seemed to be a kind of tacit understanding that the first shot was to be fired by our general. When this had been done with all due solemnity, the fight commenced at once in right good earnest, the "bumpkins" sheltering themselves behind the gravestones as much as possible, whilst we turned the walls on each side of our gates to the same purpose. I am afraid the poor little powder-monkeys often suffered the most severely, inasmuch as they were obliged to run backwards and forwards with supplies of ammunition, and were thus the most exposed of any of the combatants. Sometimes the butcher's boy, perfectly heedless of the volley of balls which were fired at him, would advance to the front of the churchyard wall, and would dare us, with many taunting words, to come out and show ourselves like men, if we wern't afraid of having our pretty faces spoiled, and that they would let us know what o'clock it was; although what connection there could be between the clock and the conflict then raging, I could never fathom. Sometimes we were too cautious to be thus entrapped from our barricade, and contented

ourselves with pelting the butcher until he was, perforce, obliged to retire under cover, half smothered with snow. Sometimes, however, the taunts would be too gross to be patiently borne, and our general, having given the word to charge, the fight would grow hot and furious. I remember on one occasion that we sallied out, and, having scaled the churchyard wall, regularly drove our enemies from the field, the butcher's boy being carried off with a cut in his head, which told an ugly story of a stone in the centre of the ball which struck him. It is only fair to add, that strong reinforcements having arrived from the village, we were beaten back again, disputing the ground, step by step, till we were obliged to take refuge ignominiously in the schoolroom, the windows of which were nearly all smashed by the "bumpkins" before they retired, whilst the features of many of us bore very evident marks of having suffered from more serious weapons than snow-balls. It was but seldom, however, that any ill-feeling of this kind was shown, as the contest was generally brought to a conclusion by the ringing of our large school-bell, a summons which none of us dared to disobey. The doctor himself had several times essayed to bring the engagement to a conclusion by the weight of his own authority; but, I am sorry to say, the villagers did not seem to have, by any means, such an exalted idea of his dignity as we entertained; for, despite his pacific intentions, they hailed his



appearance on the field of battle with such a volley of balls as caused the old man to retreat, hatless and wigless, with a precipitancy quite unusual to him, and in a plight which by no means served to elevate him in our eyes. Hence, as "our" doctor was quite as much bent on maintaining his dignity as that other doctor, who kept his hat upon his head whilst he conducted Charles II. and his courtiers, all, of course, uncovered, through his school, he took good care not unnecessarily to expose himself to any such degradation in our eyes, and, for the future, when he thought the battle had raged long enough, for I verily believe that he used to pretend unconsciousness of its existence for a certain time, he brought it to a termination by the ringing of the aforesaid bell, and we were obliged to retire, unwillingly enough, followed by the jeers and shouts, not unmingled with a few parting shots, of our natural enemies, the "bumpkins."

Poor old doctor! I owe him an apology for having so long delayed to devote a few words of this simple history to him. I have nothing but kindly memories of him, nothing but kindly words to say of the fine old gentleman who was head master of our school, and who ruled us in the old-fashioned way. I see him now, in his old-fashioned gaiters and his well-powdered wig, walking into the school with his cane under his arm, and taking his place at his desk. I hear his sonorous voice summoning his own "form," and




I can almost fancy myself once more standing before him in all the trembling anxiety attendant on an ill-learned lesson. The doctor was one of the "old school," who believed in "flogging," and who reduced his theory to practice with a fidelity which would have satisfied the most scrupulous stickler for consistency between theory and practice. The theory of punishing English boys, by shutting them up in solitary rooms and other such like devices, had not been broached in the doctor's day; and I am certain that if any such idea had been proposed to him he would have laughed it to scorn. The doctor's theory was, to feed us well; to make us study well; to encourage all kinds of hardy and manly games, and to make us look upon a liar or a coward as a despicable character to be shunned by all of us. For idleness, for trickery of any kind, and for open violation of any of the school rules, the doctor's one great remedy was a sound flogging. Moreover, I fancy he had an idea that, considered in itself, a flogging was a good thing, inasmuch as it served to make boys hardy and careless of pain. I might not be prepared to go all the way with the doctor; but I am by no means certain that his theory was not the right one after all; and that when a boy had set authority at naught, or neglected to discharge his duty, it was not a great deal better to bring the *lex talionis* into requisition, and recall the culprit to a sense of duty through the medium of a wholesome but temperate thrashing, than to

lock him up in a solitary room, where, without he were a boy of extraordinarily high principle and religious feeling, he would probably employ himself in brooding over his real or fancied wrongs, and in nursing the evil passions of his heart. However, I am getting into years now, and it may be that my ideas are somewhat old-fashioned too, and hence I seek to force them upon no one. What I am certain is, that no boy of our school ever bore malice to the doctor on account of a flogging. He was a tall, powerful old man, and the stroke of his cane, as it came with a kind of a vicious whis-s-h through the air, was certainly not to be despised. I have seen stout, fleshy boys, whose clothes had become vastly too tight for them, go through extempore dances, more remarkable for agility than grace, to say nothing of an accompaniment of yells and howls of the most piercing description, as the doctor's cane awoke them to consciousness on a drowsy summer's afternoon, or brought an illicit *tête-a-tête* to an unexpected conclusion; but I never knew a boy whose feelings of resentment lasted longer than the smart of his caning; and I know that this is more than can be said of some boys, at least, who have undergone the more modern punishment of solitary confinement. It was only the other day that a fine honest English boy, who had been at school on the continent for some time, his honest English blood mantling in his face as he spoke, declared to me that he would

rather take "twice six," * every hour in the day than be shut up for one single hour in the "condemned cell," as he called it; and I must confess that I felt glad to find how well the generous feelings of his young heart and my own old-fashioned notions chimed together. I have expressed the conviction that no boy was ever angry after a flogging from the doctor, and the reason of it was, because we believed in our hearts that the doctor never punished us except when we deserved it, because no one ever saw him flog a boy when he was angry, or saw him exceed due bounds; and, as a general rule, I believe that we dreaded the sage admonitions, the pathetic expostulations, and the touching remonstrances which accompanied each blow, a great deal more than the blows themselves. Even Schofield himself used to declare, perhaps with more force than eloquence, "that he didn't care a button for the thrashing, but that he *couldn't* stand the preaching." I once, and only once, saw a great boy, and he was an ill-favoured fellow, who had been expelled from another school, as it came out afterwards, turn upon the doctor, and (before he had recovered from the state of profound amazement into which such an unexpected act naturally threw him) send his wig flying to the other end of the schoolroom. It

* "Twice six," that is, six blows of the ferula on each hand was the most severe punishment inflicted in our school for any ordinary offence.




was an act which thrilled us with horror by its audacity, and although the poor old man certainly presented a ludicrous appearance, until a small boy summoned up courage enough to pick up the wig and bring it timidly between the tips of his fingers to its dishonoured owner, no one laughed. As an instance of how much we loved the doctor, Schofield and two or three more of the bigger boys were on their feet in the twinkling of an eye, hastening to his assistance. In about the same space of time, the audacious culprit was stretched upon a desk, undergoing a castigation which I will not particularize more fully in this place, but which, I may add, caused him, at all events, to respect legitimate authority for the future.

It was a great sight to see the old doctor on a Sunday, as he took his place at the head of the dinner-table, and proceeded to carve the huge joint of roast beef, which, with plumb-pudding always constituted our Sunday dinner. I think he suffered from gout or some other affection of the kind, and hence he did not look so well when walking; but, see him at table, his fine massive countenance breaking into a genial smile, as he looked kindly down the long line of boys whom he ruled with vigorous yet withal gentle hand, and the sight was as pleasant a one as you could well see.

Perhaps the least pleasant recollection of the kind-hearted old man is connected with the homilies, or exhortations, which were supposed to be

adapted to our special use, and which he delivered to us on a Sunday evening. It wasn't in the nature of things that we could take much interest in these discourses, extending, as they sometimes did, over more than an hour; but we strove our best to listen attentively, for, somehow, we could not help feeling that the old man was in earnest. Sometimes, even, he was affecting. Whenever there happened to be more disorder in the school than usual, he would bring forward his never-failing argument, founded upon the remorse we should feel if news should come that our parents had died whilst we were engaged in disorder or disobedience. I am not going to say a word in defence of the doctor's orthodoxy, for God has been very good to me, and I know many things now of which I was ignorant in those days. I do not mean to deny that the doctor might have founded his argument on much higher ground—I am merely relating the fact, and I know that this appeal of the doctor's to our better, if not our holier, feelings, was seldom without its effect. I believe the old man did his best, as far as he knew, to make good men of us, by making us truthful, honest, conscientious boys; by discountenancing everything that was mean or unworthy, and by endeavouring to make us always act on a principle of honour. As I have said, I have nothing but kindly memories of the kind old man who was ever a prudent counsellor and a true friend to me. I don't know that I ever wilfully incurred



his displeasure, for I never forgot, I never could forget *him* who was wearing out his life in the lonely little cottage by the sea-side, and whose very existence was so wound up in my well-doing. I have not much to say, God knows, for my youthful days; but this at least I can say, that I was faithful, with all my heart and soul, to the promise which I made him, that never thought, nor word, nor act of mine, should add one tittle to his heavy load. This promise was ever before my mind, influencing and giving a tone to my whole life with its circle of actions, and rendering me one of the quietest and most orderly of the doctor's pupils. There were several boys who passed through the school without having felt the sting of the doctor's cane, and I believe that I was one of the number, except on one special occasion, to be hereafter related. Hence, I might fear that my humble tribute to the doctor's worth was not altogether unprejudiced, did I not feel convinced that there was not a pupil in the school whose admiration was less deep, or his affection for the good old man less warm, than my own, not one who would not most willingly and most earnestly add his testimony to mine.


CHAPTER VII.

WHEN I commenced the preceding chapter of this simple history, gentle reader, I had no intention of speaking at such length on the matters which are contained in it. I did but intend to glance, in passing, at what are indeed golden memories to me, the memories of my happy youthful days; and you see how the subject grew upon me, and expanded into a chapter which I had almost completed before I adverted to the fact that I was allowing myself to wander away into the past too freely. When I *did* return to a full consciousness of my transgression, I suppose that I ought to have taken my papers over to the fire, and have mercilessly dropped them into the flames. In fact, the idea did flash across my mind, and I was already leaving my seat to put my stern resolve into immediate execution, when my courage failed, and I sat down again, and, holding my bantling tenderly in my hands the while, began to try and find some excuse for letting the aforesaid chapter retain its place in this narrative. I cannot say that my reasoning on the matter was of a peculiarly acute and overpowering nature; nay, if I speak the whole truth, I am afraid that I shall be obliged to admit that *feeling* gained the victory

over *reason*, and that, while reason and dry argument were all on the side of making a holocaust of the papers, feeling kept interfering still more powerfully on the side of their being spared, whispering so much about golden memories and happy days, and putting in so many sophisms to the effect that, what were golden memories to me, would be equally dear and cherished by many of my readers, and that the memories on which I so much loved to dwell would have an equal charm for many a one who would take up my little book, that I was fairly overcome; and, when the special pleader went so far as to suggest that some would even thank me for recalling to their minds the days long passed, days for whose remembrance we can find so little time amid the bustle and the hurry of our daily toil, but, which, nevertheless, are not forgotten, but only hidden in some out-of-the-way corner of the heart, waiting till some simple tale like mine may bring the memory of them back again to life and pristine vigour, I gave in at once. If I acted weakly, as perhaps I did, I have given you the history of the conflict and the arms by which I was overcome, in order that you may make all possible allowance for me, and, in the fullness of your benevolent feelings, bear with me whilst I pursue the subject even a little farther still.

Foremost amongst those matters connected with our youthful days on which we love to dwell, and, say what we will, to which we love to be wafted back on the wings of memory, at least now and

again, is surely the remembrance of our boyish friendships. Boyhood's friendships are generally understood to be of a very ephemeral character, and, as an ordinary rule, I suppose they are so. I should be almost afraid to say how many friends I made and lost during the years I was at Dr. Searchall's academy for young gentlemen. Every six months, at least, probably saw me with some new friend to whom I swore eternal fidelity. For some time we were inseparable. We had a common purse, a common library, (consisting, most likely, of some half-dozen "forbidden books," such as "The Life and Adventures of Celebrated Highwaymen," &c., &c.), and a fair and perfectly equal share of those consignments of good things which arrived periodically from home, and which were known in the school by the technical name of "parcels." This state of things might continue for a few months, and my new friend was certain, for the time being, to be infinitely superior, in my estimation, to all who had gone before him. But something or other would occur to cause a rupture between us, or, perhaps, without any rupture at all, the boyish affection would fade away as quickly as it had arisen, and the firm friends, we, who had sworn eternal fidelity but a month before, would grow gradually cooler towards one another, till, at last, the bond between us would be severed as lightly as it had been assumed, and those who had been inseparable would pass one another by in the play-




ground without a word, perhaps with scarcely a glance of recognition.


As I have already said, I should be afraid to say how many friendships of this nature I formed whilst at school. However, it is only just to add, that, perhaps, my experience does not furnish a fair sample of boy's friendship; for, several circumstances, to which I have no intention of referring, rendered me more or less of a favourite. Then, again, a broad distinction is to be drawn between friends and "patrons," as they were called in our school. These patrons, I need hardly explain, were the elder boys, who usually had several little fellows to run their errands, serve as general "fags," and receive their kicks or their favours as the case might be; and, of course, my friendships were not with boys of this description. It was seldom that I was without several patrons, at least, to fight my battles, and take my part in all cases of assault or battery which might arise; but I have said that my example is not a perfectly fair one; for, whilst I had generally several patrons, and *one* friend (as long as the friendship lasted), I am quite sure that there were some honest plain fellows in the school who, probably, never had a "patron" the whole time they were there, but who stood to one another truly and faithfully, and whose friendships were vastly more enduring than most of my own. I know several very respectable members of society, who were at Dr Searchall's in my time, plain-

featured, red-handed, chilblainy boys, who are staunch friends even now, and who date their friendship from their school days.

And even as regards myself, although I have confessed that I had a great many friends whose friendship did not last more than six months or so, I must say that all my boyhood's friendships were not of this description, for, I too, formed friendships at Dr. Searchall's which were of a very different character, which gave their colour to my life, and which have continued even to this day. I do not speak now of the dearest friend I ever had, Charley Morley, for his story is inseparably mixed up with my own, and it is his story much more than my own which I am to tell you in those pages; but I speak of others, others scarcely less dearly loved than he, and with a love which now, at least, has been purified and refined by that mystic influence which envelopes the memory of dear ones who have flitted from us, and which, causing us to look at them through this spiritualized medium, so to speak, makes us think of them only as of pure spirits standing, we trust, in the presence of God, abstracting and drawing us off from every thought of mere earthly affection, from every feeling of love which we cannot justly, even righteously, entertain for those who see God face to face, a love which has nothing of earth in it, and which can scarcely become thus purified so long as the object of it walks the world like



ourselves, and, like ourselves, is subject to its weakness and its frailties. It was at Dr. Searchall's that I first knew poor Percy Simmons, and, although it is now a great many years since we sat on the same bench, and learned our Virgil from the same book, I can truly say that I have never forgotten him, and that his memory is still green in my heart. Poor dear Percy! he was surely the quietest, meekest, and most inoffensive fellow that ever breathed God's blessed air. He was a little younger than myself, and I know, and, grave man that I am now, my heart grows hot as I think of it, I know that he loved me dearly. I don't believe that he ever had a "patron" in the school, he was too shy and retiring for that, but he was a dear fellow nevertheless. I remember how he used to follow me with his large dark eyes as I wandered up and down with some or other of my patrons, or with one of my ephemeral friends, and how those same eyes would brighten when leaving them, I would come over and sit by his side, for he was very weakly, and seldom joined in the more boisterous amusements of the school. Young as I was, thoughtless as I was, I could not help feeling how Percy Simmons loved me, and his love seemed to me something so holy and so pure, that I remember very well that I used to feel quite different when in his company, and used to exercise a reservation and gentleness which I did not care to practice when mixing



with my ordinary companions. I never rightly felt how much he loved me till one day, when listening to the suggestion of some petty jealousy or other, I refused to speak to him. I persevered in my sulkiness for two or three days, and whenever poor Percy attempted to accost me, turned proudly away. At length he wrote me a little note—so like himself, poor loving creature, humbly begging my pardon for having offended me, and imploring me *only* to speak to him, for it made him very unhappy, he said, not to be able to talk to me. I went over to him as soon as the classes were dismissed and held out my hand. He took it in both his own, and then, leading me away to a retired place, began to sob and cry. I remember, even now, how ashamed I felt of myself, and how careful I was ever after that, never to say anything which might give him the least pain. He left school a little before me, and I knew how much he would feel it. I tried to make light of our parting, as I shook hands with him over-night, for he was to start early in the morning. In the middle of the night I awoke from my sleep. There were two arms round my neck, and a face was resting against mine, which was all wet with his tears. He was kneeling on the floor by the side of my bed (we slept in the same room), and he had come over to me to take a last farewell of me as I slept. The moment I awoke I knew that it was he, but for a few minutes I did not let him perceive that *I was awake*; but, as I felt his face pressed so

closely against my own, and heard him sobbing, but, so softly, lest he might disturb me, I could not restrain myself, but put out my arms and drew him to my breast. The moon was shining brightly into the room, and by its light, without speaking a single word, we looked into one another's eyes for the last time. I don't know how long we remained in each other's arms, but we seemed to have a presentiment that it was a last parting, and were loath to separate. At length, however, he crept away, sobbing as if his heart were broken, to his own little bed, and I never saw him again. For some years we were wide apart. He used to write regularly to me, telling me of all his aspirations (he had embraced the profession of an artist), and of all his difficulties. When he was only twenty, he was engaged to execute the artistic decorations of a large public building. The place was damp, and he had to work in it night and day, in order to have it finished by a certain time, when it had to be opened. He completed his task, and on the opening day the public were loud in their admiration of the young artist's first work; but it was of very little consequence to him, poor fellow, for he had laid him down on the bed from which he was never to rise. It was a source of bitter regret to me, but I *could* not get away to see him. I would have given all I had to have clasped his hand once more, to have kissed his cheek once more, to have looked into his poor glazing eye once more, but circumstances were my master, and I

was obliged to submit to them. His friends were all about him as he lay on his bed of death; but I believe that the last line he ever penned was written to me. It only contained these few words:—"Remember me—your poor friend in life and death—Percy," and I don't know any price that I would take for that poor scrap of paper.

It was ten years after his death before I again saw the place where he died, and my first visit was to the churchyard. I soon found his grave. The monument they had erected over him was in the form of a broken pillar, and on its base they had put his name and age:—

PERCY SIMMONS,


Aged 20 Years,

R. I. P.

I am not ashamed to say that I knelt down upon the churchyard sod, and, putting my arms round the pillar, reverently kissed the inscription upon it. I entered in the twilight of a summer evening, but the shadows of the night were thick and heavy around me when I rose from my knees and turned away with a light, yes, even with a light and cheerful heart, leaving my friend to sleep in the peace and rest of God, in the quiet churchyard which I have never seen again since that night, but which is often present to my mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARLEY MORLEY was one of the staunchest of my friends in the days when we were together at Dr. Searchall's seminary for young gentlemen. Through good report, and through evil report I have loved him truly and faithfully ever since. When clouds gathered around him, and when it appeared almost certain that he must be crushed by the storm which had arisen, he was not less dear to me; nay, he was, if it were possible, a thousand times dearer than when the sky was bright above him, and when nought but sunshine and flowers were round his path. Charley Morley and I are both getting on in years now. We have both lived quite long enough to have passed the age of sentiment and romance, but I can lay my hand upon my heart, in all truth and earnestness, and declare that he is to-day the dearest friend I have in the world. Charley had been at Dr. Searchall's a few months before I arrived, and it was to his keeping that I was consigned when I made my entrance into that abode of science and learning. When I had paid my respects, with much trepidation and anxiety, to the doctor, and after he had tried to cheer me up with a few kindly words of encouragement, which I sadly



needed, for I was almost heart-broken at leaving my father for the first time in my life, he, rightly enough, divining that a friend of my own age would be my best comforter, rang his bell, and ordered the servant to send Master Morley to the parlour. In a few minutes the door opened, and a youth of about my own age made his appearance. I remember as if it had been but yesterday my first sight of Charley Morley, as he stood in the doorway, with his bright blue eyes, his long brown curling hair, and his handsome cheery face all mantling with smiles and blushes. He was strong and well made, but, at the same time, with an ease and gracefulness in all his motions which we so seldom see in boys, no matter how well brought up, or carefully educated they may be. There was nothing awkward, nothing gawky about him, as he advanced into the room, and you could see at once that Charley Morley was one of nature's gentlemen. The collar of his shirt was thrown back over his jacket, leaving his neck bare, and exposing it in all its delicate whiteness and beautiful proportions to the eye; whilst the aristocratic pose of his head gave him a really noble appearance, and the first impression he made upon one was, that he was as handsome, frank, and noble-looking a lad as walked the earth. This, at all events, was the first impression he created upon *me*; and, yet, as he came over to me after the doctor's introduction, and, with a winning smile which went to my heart at once,

held out his hand to me, a strange feeling, which I could not define, and for which I could give no reason, thrilled through my very soul. My heart gave one great leap, so to speak, in my breast; every drop of blood in my veins seemed to fly to my head, and for the moment I thought I should have fallen, as I faintly gasped for breath. The sensation which I experienced was that of unexpectedly meeting an old friend, one inexpressibly dear and cherished, and at a time and place quite contrary to all calculation. It seemed to me as if the face before me were quite familiar to me; and yet, when I looked at it again I had no recollection, not even the most distant, of ever having seen it before; and yet my blood was careering through my veins at such a rate at the very sight of it, that I could scarcely draw my breath. The whole thing was utterly inexplicable to me, and yet, for a few moments, I could not shake off the strange impression which the sight of my new friend had caused in me. Both he and the doctor had noticed my confusion, but, naturally attributing it to the strangeness of the position in which I found myself placed, and the timidity which I felt at meeting strangers, they made no remark upon it, and, making a vigorous effort to recover myself, in a few moments more I was able to respond to the hearty greetings of my young companion who seemed as pleased with me, as I, in my heart of hearts, was with him. As it is true that there

are some persons for whom we feel a natural aversion the very first moment we see them, so there are some whom we love, dearly and truly, and, as it were, instinctively, as soon as ever we know them; and thus it was in the present case. I felt myself at once most powerfully drawn to the bright-eyed boy who stood before me. I seemed at once and without further effort, without any train of reasoning, without any sifting of my sensations, to take him fully and without reserve to my heart, to be loved faithfully, to be loved for evermore in all sympathy, and honesty, and manly truthfulness. I had no misgiving or doubt as to whether my new friend might be a worthy object of so much honest affection. All this was swallowed up in the one overwhelming feeling which came upon me again and again, that he was not a stranger to me, but that he was very near to me, and that there was some strange bond between us, which rendered, and which must necessarily render, us very dear to one another.

All this, of course, was very strange to me at the time. I understand, and can account for it now, and can easily see that there was nothing *very* remarkable in it; but, at the time, it was perfectly inexplicable to me. Charley and I have often, oh, how often, talked since then of our first interview, and of all that it led to; and, whilst he admits that it did not strike him that he had ever seen *me* before, and that, consequently,

he did not experience the same strange sensations as myself at our first meeting, he stoutly protests, that however much I was drawn to him, he was a great deal more powerfully drawn to me (but this, of course, I deny), and that he loved me dearly from the first hour in which we met. At all events, from that time forward, Charley Morley and I were staunch friends.

He took charge of me at once; and when we had left the doctor's room, he proceeded to initiate me into all the mysteries of the school; gave me, in a very short time, a general history of all the boys; opened an account for me with the venerable Mrs. Downham, of whom mention has already been made; secured a bed for me in the dormitory in which he himself slept; and, in a word, assiduously, and in the most perfect and business-like manner discharged all the duties appertaining to his office as the protector of the "New Fellow," as the late arrivals were named. He stood to me like a man in my first fight, which occurred in this wise:—There was in the school a great slobbering fellow, whose real name I forget at this lapse of time, but I remember that he was known amongst us by the sobriquet of "Game Cock." He was a thorough bully, but had established a reputation for himself by thrashing poor little fellows when they first arrived at the school, and when they were far too much frightened to resist. I had only been in the place two or three days, and had not had time to get completely over

my home sickness, when this big bully met me in the play-ground, and, without provocation on my part, and without a word on his, deliberately gave me rather a smart slap in the face. I was taken by surprise, and was just beginning to cry, when Charley, who had been keeping a sharp eye on me, to see that I did not get into mischief, was by my side in a moment.


"What did you do that for, you big cowardly bully," roared Charley, who was game to the back-bone. "Why don't you hit a fellow of your own size? but you know that you *daren't* do that," he continued, getting very red in the face, and beginning to fidget with his jacket, as if contemplating the casting aside of that garment.

"I will hit *you*, at all events, you impudent young rascal," returned the Cock; and, indeed, he was anything but a *Game* cock (from which pugnacious bird, I suppose, he derived his sobriquet), as it turned out in the end—at the same time aiming a fierce blow at Charley, who wasn't much more than half his size.

Charley's jacket was off and thrown upon the ground in the twinkling of an eye. "You take him behind, Atty," screamed Charley, to me. "I'll tackle him in front; and between us we'll do for the big, hulking bully, see if we don't."

I hadn't had much experience in pugilistic encounters; in fact, I may say that this was my first pitched battle; but my spirit was up, and we went at it in right good earnest. According to

Charley's instructions, I harassed the Cock in the rear as much as possible, by clinging round his waist, kicking him on the shins, and interfering in all possible ways with the play of his arms; whilst Charley certainly gave it to him in first-rate style, and contrived to avoid his heavy blows with great skill and dexterity. I received some nasty scrapes, for the bully struck out viciously behind every now and then; but I clung to him as if my life depended on it. The boys crowded round us, shouting and cheering us on, and while cries of "ten to one on the little ones," rose from every part, the remarks which were addressed to our antagonist were decidedly more forcible than complimentary; for, like all bullies, he was thoroughly hated. The battle went on with varied success for some minutes, Charley receiving some heavy "thuds," spite of all his agility and dexterity in avoiding the blows of the Cock. At last, whilst Charley was making a more than usually vigorous attack in front, I contrived to get my leg between those of the big coward, who had assailed me in such an unprovoked manner, and giving my own leg a sudden twist, whilst I, at the same time, threw the whole weight of my body upon him; down he came heavily upon the ground, whilst a ringing cheer from all around greeted our successful manœuvre. Charley sprang aside, and thus escaped falling under him, and in an instant we were both upon him. He made tremendous efforts to shake us off and rise, but it was no



use; we had him now, and we made the best of our advantage. I continued to cling to his arms, and contrived to keep them down, so that he could not use them freely. I got one heavy blow from him which seemed to light a thousand candles somewhere close to my face, and caused the blood to spirt out from my nostrils, but I never relinquished my hold of his arm, and Charley, clinging with his left hand to the neck of the prostrate Cock, pommeled him in the face and about the head with his right till he roared again for mercy. I know that it may be objected that this was not a recognised mode of fighting, and that it wasn't fair to hit our adversary when he was down; but then, you must remember, that he was twice our size, and at least five or six years older than either of us, and that we gave him no provocation, but quite the contrary; and then, I think, you will admit that in such a conflict and under such circumstances, we were quite justified in our mode of proceeding. Our blood was now fairly up, and Charley continued to pommel away with all his might, whilst I executed, as I hung about his waist, and pinioned one of his arms, a vigorous "pedal movement" on his legs and shins, and between us, I think, we should have scarcely left him alive if the boys, who were actually dancing round us with shouts of exultation, had not forcibly dragged us away from our prostrate foe, patting us on the back the while, and wiping the blood from both our faces. We were con-

ducted in great triumph, and amid much jubilatory noise from our companions to the pump and well-washed. When this operation had been gone through, and we came to reckon up the casualties of the affray, I discovered that the colour of the flesh in the vicinity of my eyes was a good deal darker than was its wont, whilst my nose presented a decidedly "puffy" appearance. Charley had lost a tooth, and his mouth was badly cut and bruised, but we held our injuries as nothing, when, hearing loud shouts, yells, derisive cock-crowing, and other ignominious and provocative sounds, such as boys, and, perhaps, members of parliament, alone have the faculty of producing, we looked in the direction whence they proceeded, and beheld our antagonist slinking off to bed, from which he did not rise for several days. Next morning Charley and I were called up by Dr Searchall, and informed that according to the rules of the school, in all cases of pugilistic encounters, we had incurred the penalty of "twice nine" each, which the doctor forthwith proceeded to administer, our companions all looking on, of course, at the punishment. Before administering the blows, Dr. Searchall gave us a long lecture on the very ungentlemanly habit of boxing. He pretended to be very angry; but I thought at the time he was speaking that he was only "pretending," and I was quite convinced that this was the case, as soon as I felt the first blow of the ferula; for, although it *seemed* to come

down hard, it didn't hurt a bit, and, having received my twice nine I walked to my seat as proud as a king.

Poor old doctor! It was only when I was leaving school for good and all, and when the dear old man was shaking my hand for the last time, and giving me his parting words of advice, that he informed me that he had witnessed the whole fight from his parlour window, and had peremptorily refused to listen to Mrs. Searchall's entreaties that he would send out and have the combat stopped. "I knew that you would thrash the big bully," said the doctor, shaking me again still more warmly by the hand, and I wouldn't have stopped the fight on any account. God bless you, my boy," he went on. "Be a man—never do or say anything that you would be ashamed to do or say in the presence of your mother; and, pitch into a bully whenever you can," he added, with a hearty earnestness which was sadly at variance with his professions on many occasions when speaking on the subject of fights.

As regards our antagonist, the Cock, it was several days before he made his appearance in the school. He, of course, was called up too, and received his lecture, and his ferulas; I was standing near the doctor's chair at the time, and as I heard the "whish" of the ferula, as it came down upon the palm of his hand, and beheld the contortions which his face immediately underwent, to say nothing of an extraordinary kind of a

dance on one leg which he seemed involuntarily to perform, I knew that the Cock was getting it, and no mistake, and that there was no pretence this time. When the flagellation was over, he went howling away to his place, and, laying his big head on the desk, cried for half an hour. In a day or two after this, Charley and I sent a mutual friend to state that we bore no malice, and should be happy to meet him at Mrs. Downham's any day he would name. The Cock returned an amicable answer to the effect that he bore no malice either, and that, if that same afternoon, when class was over, would suit our convenience, he would be very happy to meet us in the place assigned. Charley and I, the mutual friend, and the Cock, accordingly contrived to meet at Mrs. Downham's as soon as the evening classes were dismissed. The order of the proceeding was as follows:—We were there before our late antagonist arrived. When he made his appearance at the door, we both advanced four steps to meet him. He advanced the same number of paces towards us. We then shook hands, the mutual friend looking on with a critical eye the while, and expressing his opinion, that everything had been done in a most gentlemanly and satisfactory manner. When this proceeding had terminated, we adjourned to Mrs. Downham's little room, and consumed, I should really be afraid to say how many shillings' worth of tarts and ginger beer, only, I remember, that I paid for them,


being rather full of cash at the time, as my father had supplied my pocket very liberally when I was leaving home.

From this time forward my character was established in the school, and I suffered no more annoyance either from the Cock or any of his class. I fell at once into my place, and began to feel very happy in my new sphere of life, with its new duties, its new associations, and its new companions. Not that I ever, even for a moment, forgot him, the idol of my love, who wrote to me every week from his lonely cottage by the sea-side, and never ceased to urge me on with words of earnest tenderness to do my duty like a man. I had not failed, you may be sure, to tell him all about my new friend, and how dear he was to me; and I know that my father loved Charley for the very fact that he loved me, and was a faithful friend to the treasure of his heart. I say that I know this, because this was the way he used to express it in his letters to me, and *he* never wrote or said anything which he did not mean.

And thus, some years, aye, and very happy years too, flitted away; and many of the leaves which now lie withered and dead put forth their buds, and, with fair promise of much fruit to come, blossomed bravely in the genial freshness of my life's young spring.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME two years or so of nearly constant intercourse had done much to cement the strong friendship which had sprung up between Charley and me on our first acquaintance, when an event occurred which put the crowning stroke to it, and rendered it about as firm as, I fancy, human friendship can ever be. My poor father, whose health had been breaking sadly of late, had been imperatively ordered to spend the winter in a warmer climate. He had resisted this command as long as resistance was possible; but I had joined my entreaties to the order of the physician, and had so besought him to consent, that at last he had given way. He then spoke much of taking me with him; but, as I knew very well that the double expense would be more than he could bear, I had combated the proposal on the ground that it would interfere with my education; although, in very truth, God only knows how my heart yearned to accompany him, how bitterly I felt the coming separation, and how I trembled and grew pale with sad foreboding lest we might never meet again. Still, I tried to look at things as cheerfully as I could, and after a very, very bitter



struggle with myself, I was able to overcome my inclination by what I knew to be my duty; and I prevailed upon him to leave me behind. He came down and spent a day or two at the doctor's before he set off, and after a very sorrowful parting, he started in the month of October, as well as I remember, and was to return in the coming spring. In consequence of this sad journey, I was looking forward to the somewhat dreary prospect of remaining at Dr. Searchall's when the rest of my companions had returned home to spend the Christmas vacation with their respective families. The idea was anything but a pleasing one, for I had always been very "tender" on the subject of Christmas, and this would be the first one which I had spent away from home, and its happy associations. However, there was no help for it, and I was endeavouring to brace myself up to suffer the infliction with as much fortitude as possible, when Charley, who had, without mentioning the matter to me, written home for permission to do so, invited me, in the name of his parents, to accompany him home, and spend my Christmas vacation with him.

I need scarcely say how gladly I accepted the invitation of my friend; and, on the 23rd of December, we started in high spirits for Morley House. We had a long ride in the mail coach—for, at the time of which I write, the railway had not penetrated to the village in which Colonel and Mrs. Morley resided. As we journeyed along,

Charley gave me some insight into the family with which I was so soon to make my acquaintance. He spoke of his father with great pride, and with all possible affection; and, yet, there was a kind of reticence, almost imperceptible, indeed, in the tones of his voice as he spoke of him, which led me to expect that I should find Colonel Morley a man of somewhat distant and haughty manners, or, in other words, if I may be allowed to use an expressive, though not a particularly elegant phrase, that I should find him rather "stiff;" and I was not disappointed. He had never been in the army, so Charley told me, but derived his title of colonel from a yeomanry regiment, or something of that kind. They had also another house, he went on to say, somewhat more in the north, but he did not exactly remember where, as they never resided there, and he had never even seen it. It was only when he spoke of his mother that all the tenderness of his young and generous love seemed to find expression in words. She was the best, the dearest, and the kindest mother in all the world, with a great deal more to the same effect, which I must beg of you, courteous reader, to imagine as well as you can. He, however, proceeded, to my profound astonishment, to inform me that his mother was not of the same religion as his father—in other words, that she was a Catholic. I say that I was profoundly astonished at this, for although now-a-days, thank God, Catholics are not such rare individuals in this realm of England, you must

please remember that I write of some thirty years ago, when, in truth, a Catholic was a "rara avis" in the fullest sense of the word, and when the few who were scattered up and down the country thought it their best policy to keep themselves as much out of sight as possible, and deemed themselves highly privileged and very happy, indeed, if they could secure a garret in some out-of-the-way street, whither they might steal now and then—perhaps once in the month—to discharge, in secrecy, and even with fear and trembling, the duties of their religion. I speak of the times when a Catholic and a South Sea Islander were about equally well known in England; and you must not suppose, courteous reader, that this is so *very* long ago either, for it is not very difficult to find those who remember when the Liverpool of to-day, with its numerous churches, and its hundreds of thousands of Catholics, could only boast of one church and one priest; and when Manchester had no resident priest at all; and so of our other large towns. Hence, you may understand my astonishment at hearing from Charley that his mother was a Catholic; for I had never met a person of that religion except my humble friends in France; neither had it entered into my mind to conceive that there were any Catholics, except in that or some other foreign countries. I learnt afterwards that she was a daughter of one of those noble old English houses, who had clung to the faith of their fathers through trials and perse-

cutions of every kind, and who had kept alive by sacrifices known only to God and themselves, the flickering flame, which, but for their fostering care, must, according to all human calculation, have been extinguished; but which, through all the weary years of suffering and of pain, was watched and tended by a faithful few, and which, when it had dwindled away till but the faintest spark was left, was never without the martyr's generous blood to feed and nourish it to more vigorous growth; till, by little and by little, it has expanded yet once more into a mighty flame, whose light is shining through the length and breadth of our land, with cheering promise of even yet more glorious things to come.

I had scarcely recovered from the strange sensation which this intelligence produced upon me, when Charley, who seemed determined to overwhelm me altogether with amazement, proceeded to inform me that he, too, was, or, as he termed it, ought to be a Catholic.

"But, Charley," I remember saying to him, "how can this be. You have always gone to church with the rest of us on the Sunday. You have attended all our prayers and religious exercises. How can you be a Catholic? It is more than I can understand;" and, in truth, it *was* more than I could understand.

"Oh, now, Atty," he answered, with seeming carelessness, and yet I could see that he was not altogether at ease, "you needn't look so serious.

It isn't a matter of much consequence, and I don't see that *you* need be at all troubled about it. I should think that you would be pleased, rather than otherwise, to find me so much of a Protestant, although I was baptized and reared a Catholic."


He was wrong, very wrong, there. I wasn't pleased to hear him speak so lightly on so serious a matter; and it appeared to me of so much consequence, that I was troubled, seriously and deeply troubled, about it. Of course I knew next to nothing about Catholics or their doctrines. The very remembrance of Pere Felix, and my simple friends in France, and, above all, of the lady and the child whom I had once loved so dearly in my childish way, had nearly faded from me. I suppose that I *ought* to have been glad to hear Charley speak as he did, and that I ought to have hailed him as a convert from darkness to light; and, yet, for I remember it perfectly, my whole soul seemed at once, and, as it were, instinctively, to rise in rebellion against the idea. It was very strange that it should be so; but so it was. It was, doubtless, very unreasonable on my part, but the feeling, or the impulse, or whatever you may wish to call it, was there, and I could not, neither did I try to drive it away, that Charley was wrong; and, somehow, I felt as if I loved him a degree less than I had done a few minutes previously, and before I had heard his avowal.

I suppose something of all this must have shown

itself on my face, for, suddenly, a very serious expression crossed his countenance, and he took my hand between both his own.

"Nay, Atty, old fellow," he said, in a low, earnest voice, "don't take on about this matter. I didn't mean to vex or annoy you. I thought you wouldn't care about it. Perhaps," he went on, still more earnestly, "I have been wrong; nay, I am sure that I must have been very wrong; but still it never struck me so. You see, it was so strange altogether. My mother says that I was baptized by a Catholic priest, and I remember very well that when I was a child she always made me say my Catholic prayers. I even recollect having been to confession to a venerable old man, who used to visit our house at long intervals, remaining a day or two when he came. Then my father began to interfere, and there were great troubles in our family; and I know that my poor mother used to steal away to my room at night and hang over me in my bed, and weep as if her heart were broken, calling upon God to forgive her her great sin, and protect her child from every ill. When I strove to understand all this, and questioned her about it, she would only wring her hands the more, and beg of me, as I loved her, as I prized her love, to remember the lessons she had taught me. Then she would ask me to make the sign of the cross, and repeat the little prayers which I had learnt from her, but all the while in a sadly frightened, timid way; and if steps were

heard approaching, more especially if they were those of my father, she would strain me to her heart for one brief moment, cover my face with her kisses, and hurry away. My father now invariably insisted upon my accompanying himself to church every Sunday; and I think he must have forbidden my mother to speak to me about the Catholic religion, for she never did so openly or directly, but only in the manner I have mentioned. I know he loves my mother dearly, but that is only what every one who knows her does," broke out Charley, in a sudden burst of affection; "and I would lay down my life to make her happy this very moment, that I would. But he took me entirely under his own control in regard to religion, and he soon sent me off to school. She nearly broke my heart the night before I left home," continued Charley, bursting out into great sobs, which made me very glad that we were the only two passengers inside the mail, "for she never left my bedside the whole night, weeping and wailing, and begging God to pardon her her great sin. And, you know, Atty," he cried out quite loudly, his face all burning with the vehemence of his emotion, "you know that *my* mother was never guilty of anything, never committed any act for which she should call on God to pardon her. But she did;—she watched by me all night long, never leaving off that sad cry for pardon, except to beg of me to love her and be good. And I do love her, Atty," he cried, getting more and more



excited. "I love her more than my life. I would die for you this very moment, that I would, my darling, darling mother! Who dares to say that I don't love you better than all the world besides?" he asked, quite fiercely, looking round the coach, although, as I have said, there was no one in it except ourselves.

I had never seen him so excited in my life before, and, for a moment, I was almost frightened at the intensity of his passion. I did my best to soothe him, and in a moment more he was sobbing in my arms, and relieving his feelings by a copious rush of tears, which I did not seek to interrupt, knowing that it would do him good; and, if for an instant a shadow had passed across my love for him, I think I loved him better than ever now, at least as long as he remained in this mood.

In a short time he went on. "Once I was at school, you know, Atty," he resumed, half apologetically, "I forgot the little I had ever known about my mother's religion, and, although there is a kind of a lurking feeling in the bottom of my heart that I ought to be a Catholic, still, I think, I am bound to obey my father, too; and, so, between the two feelings I am almost puzzled. Besides, you know," he continued, in his frank, dashing manner, "I am not a religious fellow. I am not like some of the boys. I am always getting into some scrape or other, which makes me know very well that I'm not religious, and, hence, perhaps, I spoke too lightly about this affair;

but I didn't mean to do it, Atty, I didn't mean to be light or disrespectful. You know," he repeated, "I'm not a religious fellow; but still, I intend to be as good as I can, for *her* sake, and when I am able to tell what I ought to do, I intend to do it. I'll do what's right, I don't care what it costs me; and, if any one says that I don't love my mother better than all the world," he broke out again, finishing in true schoolboy style, "it's a foul lie, and I'll fight him as long as I have a breath in my body."

I had scarcely recovered from the state of astonishment into which I had been thrown by all this, when the mail drew up, and we were set down at the lodge of Colonel Morley's residence. A tall, portly gentleman, attended by several servants, was waiting our arrival. This gentleman I at once discovered to be Colonel Morley, and, if I had entertained any doubts on the subject, they would have been quickly set at rest when I beheld the warmth with which Charley rushed into his arms. I stood shyly by for a moment or two, feeling somewhat embarrassed; but, in a moment more, the gentleman turned round to welcome me, Charley introducing me as his dear friend, Arthur Howard.

As Colonel Morley took me kindly by the hand, I raised my eyes to his face. As I did so, the same strange sensation, which I had experienced on my first introduction to Charley, ran through my frame, the same strange feeling that the face before me was wonderfully familiar to me, and,

again, I fairly gasped for breath, as my heart beat till I could scarcely breathe. And, yet, I knew that I saw Colonel Morley for the first time. My reason told me this, told me as clearly as that two and two made four, that I had never seen him in my life before; and, again, I was fairly puzzled. To increase my amazement, I saw that Colonel Morley turned deadly pale as his eyes met mine. I saw that he was scanning my face with a strangely earnest scrutiny, and I felt his hand tremble and close with a nervous twitch upon my own. He muttered something very indistinctly, but I thought that I caught the words "strange, very, very strange;" for, all this did not occupy more than a minute, much less time, indeed, than it has taken me to describe it. In a moment the paleness passed away from his face, and his hand grew firm, as with many words of kindly greeting he welcomed me to Morley House. He kept my hand in his own as he conducted us through a beautifully kept lawn towards Morley House, a large and elegant mansion, telling at once by its appearance of the wealth and affluence of its occupants. At the hall door stood a lady, evidently waiting for us. The moment Charley espied her, he gave one great shout, threw down a small bag he was carrying in his hands, and, in another instant, was hanging round his mother's neck. Their mutual embraces were scarcely over, when the colonel and I reached the place where they were standing. The colonel was about to

introduce me formally, but she came forward at once to me, declaring that she needed no introduction to *me*, and the kind, motherly kiss which she imprinted upon my face, as she drew me to her, caused me to feel perfectly at home in an instant. We had barely time to run up stairs and wash our hands when the dinner bell sounded, and in a very short space of time after our arrival we were sitting round a plentiful table, and with an appetite, after our long ride, fully prepared to do ample justice to the dainty viands with which it was spread.

I had now time to look about me, and take a closer survey of the family in which I found myself located. Colonel Morley was a tall handsome man of some fifty years of age, as well as I could guess; but his face was one of those which afford but an uncertain index to a man's real age, for, whilst his features might fairly have belonged to a man of forty, the whiteness of his hair might as fairly have represented the snows of some sixty winters. He was very affable and kind, and, yet, with that quick perception of character which young people so often possess, I at once came to the conclusion that, naturally, he was very proud and haughty, and that I should not like to offend him, or come in collision with him. Such, too, I concluded was the case with Charley, for I saw in an instant, that, although he evidently loved and was fond of his father, he, nevertheless, stood in considerable awe of him, and never in his presence

gave full vent to the animal spirits with which he overflowed. What struck me most forcibly in Colonel Morley was a strange habit to which he was subject, and to which I can scarcely give a name. I suppose "abstraction," would be the nearest approach to it. For example, whilst engaged in conversation, a dark cloud would suddenly pass across his face, his features contracting, as it were from a spasm or some internal pain, whilst his thoughts evidently and palpably wandered away from the subject in hand, as was easily gathered from the fixed, absent, and, I might almost say, stony look of his eyes. Thus he would remain, abstracted and wholly insensible to everything about him, for several minutes, till, suddenly recollecting himself, he would by a vigorous effort recover himself, and the dark cloud passing away from his face, would be himself again. I soon became used to this, and did not heed it; but at first, I remember, that it created a very unpleasant impression upon me, not altogether unmixed with sympathy for him, for I could not divest myself of the idea that he was not happy, and that some unpleasant recollection evidently pressed heavily upon his mind; neither could I altogether shake off the strange sensation I had experienced when I met him at the gate of his lodge, on the night of my arrival; but, by degrees, either it became dimmer or I grew more accustomed to it, so that I did not notice its presence in my mind. It was only when I raised my

eyes, and, as it sometimes happened, found Colonel Morley scanning me with the same strange earnest scrutiny that this sensation came upon me again; but, it appeared to me so unreasonable, so utterly devoid of all foundation, that I did my best not to listen to, or yield to it; and, to a great extent, at least, I think I succeeded.

Mrs. Morley was one of the kindest, dearest creatures whom it has ever been my lot to meet. Running over with the milk of human kindness, she seemed to exist only to do good; and I have never forgotten, nor, can I ever forget, the love, the kindness, and the sympathy with which she listened to my little story, as I told it to her that same evening in a snug corner of the drawingroom, and informed her that I had no mother, no brother, no sister, no one but my father left to me in the whole world. When I had finished my tale, I saw that her large blue eyes were full of tears as she put away my hair with her hands, and kissed me on the brow, as tenderly as my own dead mother might have done.

No! I have never forgotten my first evening at Morley House.

CHAPTER X.

MY first evening at Morley House was a very, very happy one, and I knew at once that I was in for a real merry Christmas. I was profuse in my protestations to Charley, when we had gone up to bed, of gratitude and never-dying affection for him and his. Our two little bedrooms opened into one another, and, after the rather plain lodging with which we were provided at Dr. Searchall's, they appeared almost luxurious in their cosy comfort. We were both tired, and soon retired. I had not been in bed more than a few minutes, when I heard the door of Charley's room softly opened, and a gentle step enter in:—I knew, instinctively, that it was his mother who had gone to kiss her darling ere he slept, and something very like a feeling of envy passed for a moment or so through my mind, for, as I have already mentioned, my mother had died whilst I was yet a mere infant; and, I may say, that I never knew the priceless blessing of a mother's love. She remained with him for a few minutes, and I lay quite still, listening for her to go away, when, to my great astonishment, the door of my own room was gently opened, and Mrs. Morley entered with a candle in

her hand. She placed the candle on my table, and then, coming over to my little bed, kissed me, even as she had done her own darling boy, asking me in such a soft sweet voice, that it made my very blood thrill as I listened to it, whether she might not be a mother to me, too. I strove to speak to her, but I was not able, for a swelling kind of a sensation, which I felt in my throat, and which prevented me from uttering a single word; but, I remember, that I put my two arms out of the bed, and drew her dear motherly face down to mine, and laid my head upon her breast. She kissed me again, and I heard her murmuring to herself some words which seemed like "poor motherless boy—poor motherless boy," only I could not be sure of them, they were so very low and indistinct, and then she retired as softly as she had entered. I was rather a big boy at the time; but I am not in the least ashamed to confess, that, after she had gone away, I cried myself to sleep, for in the love of Charley's mother I realized, as I had never done before, all that my own mother might have been to me, if God had spared her to me. From that night forward, I am sure that Charley's mother took the place of my own to me as much as ever one who is not really his mother can do to another, and in all the trials, all the troubles and afflictions of my younger days, I always went to her for comfort and consolation, and never left her without bringing away with me that of which I stood in need.

My sleep was of the heaviest, and my dreams of the happiest, the first night I slept at Morley House. I was awoke by a loud voice ringing in my ears, and found Charley standing, half dressed, by my bedside. I was up and dressed in a very short time, and out we went to take a look about us before breakfast, as Charley expressed it. We had scarcely made our appearance when Charley was surrounded by half a dozen servants, who were striving for the honour of a salutation. I must give Charley all due credit, and confess that he was perfectly impartial in the distribution of his favours; and I saw more than one old man's eye glistening as the young master shook him kindly and heartily by the hand. One quaint-looking old man, who answered to the name of Roger, succeeded, however, in leading us off to his own proper dominions, the stables, where we found a couple of beautiful ponies, and ere the bell sounded for breakfast, we had enjoyed a famous gallop; and entered the room ruddy from the morning breeze, and in the highest spirits. The rest of the day was spent in assisting Mrs. Morley and the servants in decorating the house with evergreens; and by the time that evening arrived, we had succeeded in converting it into a perfect bower. Towards night more guests made their appearance, of whom I will only speak of a gentleman of the name of Crosby, and his daughter, a beautiful girl of some sixteen years of age, so near as I could judge. I specify them because they

are, or, at least, Mary Crosby is, intimately connected with an incident to be hereafter related in this story. She was a charming girl, light-hearted and full of spirits, and yet with a depth of feeling about her, which, I remember, struck me very much, young as I then was. She and Charley were evidently great friends, and were inseparable partners in all our dances and amusements during the festive season. On Christmas eve we sat around the yule log in the drawing-room, and no one attempted to stir until the clock struck twelve. At the same moment, the bells of the old church hard by rang out their merriest peal to announce the God made man; and their sound seemed to awaken, as if by magic, every tenderest feeling in our souls. There were not many words spoken, but the hearty grip of the friendly hand, and the kisses which were freely, and, I must say, somewhat indiscriminately, interchanged, sent us all off to bed in the happiest frame of mind. I felt almost too happy to sleep when I had gone up to my own room; and I was quite glad to see my door open, and Charley's beaming face make its appearance. When he found me sitting by my fire, he brought a chair and joined me, and we sat far into the night chatting in a low tone of voice, with the sweet music of the old church bells breaking in upon us every now and then, with strange and fitful strains. I don't remember what we found to talk about; but I am quite sure that as we sat hand in hand before the flickering flame in the

grate, we were intensely, though quietly, happy, and that we again and again interchanged our mutual protestations of affection and love.

The Christmas holydays sped rapidly away, and a happier season I never spent. I found myself, for the first time in my life, enjoying the comforts of home, together with what I had never enjoyed in my own desolate homestead, the society of young people of my own age and tastes. Mrs. Morley took to me more and more every day, and seemed to watch every opportunity of renewing her promise to be a second mother to me; and I should find it very hard were I to attempt to describe how my heart expanded to the dear, kind, motherly woman, and how dearly I began to love her. Indeed I almost wonder that Charley did not become jealous of me, I engrossed so much of his own mother's love and attention; but he, dear fellow, was far too noble-hearted to admit any such feeling. He was evidently delighted to see how well I was getting on amongst his own people, and more than once gave hearty expression to his feelings on the point. Colonel Morley was as kind to me as it was possible for me to expect. Indeed, considering the general reserve and hauteur of his ordinary deportment, I was more than once surprised to hear how tender the tones of his voice were when he addressed me, as I frankly told him the story of my life, and all that was before me in the world.

Skating, riding, dancing, and a succession of

parties, both at Colonel Morley's own hospitable mansion, and at the houses of the families residing in the neighbourhood, tended to make the brief space of our Christmas holydays all too short; and we viewed its approaching termination with feelings very much akin to dismay. The last night came, as those last nights *will* come; and, as both Charley and I begged that there might be no party on that evening, we spent it very quietly, and somewhat sorrowfully, for, in spite of all our efforts to hide it, the approaching separation pressed heavily upon us, and overthrew by its presence our forced efforts at gaiety; and so at last we gave up the vain attempt, and sat in comparative silence till the time arrived for retiring to our rooms. I heard Charley's mother enter his room, as usual, after we had retired; and I was not surprised that she remained with him longer than she had done on the other nights, for I knew something of the depth of her true motherly heart by this time. However, at last she came on to my own room, as she had done every night since that first one on which I had laid my head with such trusting confidence upon her breast. She sat down by the side of my bed, and took in both her own the hand which, without a word, I put out to her. She talked to me a long time in a low, soft voice, and I know that my heart grew hot within me as I listened to her motherly words. No matter what she said to me—only, I may add, that I have heard many sermons in my

life, and listened to many eloquent preachers, but I doubt whether I have ever heard one who better, or more effectually, moved my soul to good and holy purposes, than did Charley Morley's mother on that well-remembered night.

Morning came, cold and dark. A hurried breakfast, and the horn of the guard is heard signaling the arrival of the mail on which we are to travel back to Dr. Searchall's seminary for young gentlemen. Long shaking of hands, a good many kisses, and, I may just as well tell the truth, and add, a good many tears, protestations of never-dying affection, and liberal "tip" from Colonel Morley in the shape of two golden guineas each, and we are on the outside of the mail, driving away at full speed from Morley House. Sulks and silence for half an hour or so on the part of Charley and myself, and then a gradual cheering up of our drooping spirits. Another half hour, and we are making futile efforts to smoke a cigar which is making us horribly sick, but which we pretend to relish amazingly. Half an hour more, and we reach the place where we change horses. Of course we get down to warm ourselves, and imbibe more brandy and water, hot with sugar, than is at all suitable to our age, and the state of our stomachs, already sufficiently weakened from the effects of the cigars: of course we ask the coachman and guard "what they will take," and they, with many thanks, will of course take "summut short," which whatever that may mean, has a won-

derful effect in colouring up their noses, and giving a generally high tone to their complexions. Then we are on the mail again, the guard taking good care to pack us well in amongst the fat farmers who are our fellow-travellers—a precaution by no means useless, after our unaccustomed potations; and, so, after more glasses of brandy and water, more futile attempts to smoke, and more asking of the coachman and guard “what they will take” at every halting place, we arrive, towards evening, at Dr Searchall’s, in a somewhat dilapidated condition, and quite ready for bed, to which the good old housekeeper hurries us away on the plea of our being very tired, but, in reality, that we may not be subjected to the eagle eye of the doctor, until a good night’s rest shall have prepared us to enter on the “new half” with all due decorum and dignity.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARLEY left at the end of the next "half," and accompanied his parents to the continent, where they were about to spend some months. I need scarcely say that we parted after numerous protestations of never dying affection, and promises of faithful and frequent correspondence. I spent that summer vacation with my darling father in our little cottage by the sea-side, and, I remember it but too well. He had returned home, after his winter in the south, little, if anything, stronger. His poor pale face grew paler every day, his eyes more bright, and the veins upon his brow more painfully distinct. I remember that his hand used to feel sadly thin and worn as it rested on my own, and that I seemed to feel it almost like a reproach to be so strong and vigorous whilst he was fading away before my very eyes. His voice, too, was very low and gentle now, and its tones seemed to grow ineffably tender and full of love. Still, he was able to walk about as usual, except that he was very easily tired; and it never entered into my mind that I was so soon to lose him. I think that God in His merciful goodness kept the knowledge of what was coming hid from me, and

I am very thankful that it was so; for, if I could have foreseen what was so shortly to happen, I know that I should not have been able to restrain my grief within bounds. I know that I should have wrung his heart with pain, and added to his heavy load of sorrow by the manifestation of my own. I know that I should have broken into loud and bitter wailing, even before his very face; and I am thankful in my inmost heart that I was spared from adding one single tittle to my darling's grief, especially by such a grief as *that* would have been to him.

I am equally thankful, too, to be able to remember that I was more than usually gentle and loving with him during that vacation. Not that I have anything with which to reproach myself on this head at any time; but, still, I know that I felt during that time a greater and more powerful instinct in my heart to be always near him, to lay my hand as often as ever I could within his own, to draw his face down to mine whilst I whispered into his ear my simple earnest words of love and trust, and never-dying sympathy. We don't think much of these little tokens of love at the time, perchance; but when the dear object of them has passed for ever from out of our sight, when the well-known seat is vacant, and the sound of the well-known foot has been for ever hushed, oh, then, they are priceless in their lightest memory. *Then*, we look back to all that is past; and, whilst we can scarcely forgive ourselves

if we find that there was anything, no matter how slight, which we might have done, and did not do, we prize above all treasures of the world, and dwell with fondest recollection upon each kindly word, each little nameless office of our love, each outward token which made manifest to the object of it, the fathomless fount of love which was welling up within our souls, and which could find no other expression for it. It is thus that I look back to those few weeks, and thank my God that they present me with no memories but those of fond affection, with nothing but the outpouring of my soul, as it were, in one great yearning act of love. And *he*, too, seemed to live more than ever, if that had been possible, in me and my love. He would follow me about with a restless, anxious gaze, till I had gone over to him and placed myself by his side; and *then* he was happy, clasping my hand in his, and speaking to me long and earnestly, in those low, gentle tones which seemed to suit his voice better now than ever. I was to leave school in one year more, and we spoke much of my future prospects. I was strangely undecided as to my future life, and found it almost impossible to fix my mind upon the choice of my calling. Sometimes I inclined to one pursuit, sometimes to another, but I could decide upon none; but *he* never ceased to exhort me, whatever I might do, to discharge my duty like a man; to be a man of truth, of honour, and of never-swerving probity. And so the few weeks of my vacation flitted all

too quickly away. On the last night, we walked together to the little churchyard where my mother was laid. The walk was almost too much for him; but he had shown such an anxiety to visit my mother's grave on this evening, that we had set out. When we arrived he was very tired, and sat down to rest upon a tombstone by the side of the grave. I took my place beside him, and for a few moments neither of us spoke. I felt his arm stealing about my neck, and then he drew me nearer to him, and laid his head upon my shoulder, his cheek quite close to mine. I don't know whether he had a clearer foresight of what was to happen than I had, and that he knew that we sat there together for the last time, and that his heart was breaking with the thought; but presently my darling began to sob and cry—great sobs that rent my heart with anguish breaking from him, as his head lay upon my shoulder.

Presently I heard him speaking, but in a voice so low and indistinct, so broken with his sobs, that I could scarcely catch its tones, but I strained my ear and listened. "Atty, my own heart's treasure," was all he said, "when anything happens to me, lay me by *her* side, in this quiet graveyard, and sometimes think of me with a loving thought, for God alone knows, my treasure, how I have loved and prized, and cherished you; God alone knows how dear, above all price, you are to me."

Oh! my darling! oh! my darling! to hear him speaking thus, and I, in my youth and inex-

perience, not to know, God help me, what was coming on us—not to perceive the cloud that was lowering around us, not to see the shadow that was on his face, nor the hand that was already chilling him with its icy touch,—but to go away and leave him when I should never see him again, and, when, if I had known what was so soon to happen, not all the world should have torn me from him. But I didn't know, God help me—I didn't know. I had never seen death, and how was I to know it? I had heard of it, I knew that the world was full of it, but I had never realized it. It had never been brought home to me, and how was I to know its marks? how was I to discern its coming? how was I to tell that it was at hand—and, so, in my youthful ignorance and inexperience I went away, and I never saw my darling's living face again.

It was in the end of October, the 22nd day of the month, that I was summoned, early in the morning, to the doctor's room. I entered, all unconscious of the tidings which awaited me. He had an open letter in his hand, and, I remember, that I thought the expression on his face was very sad, and very full of pity, as I entered, but, still, I never guessed the truth. It was only when he had placed me by his side, and begun to speak to me, his voice quivering all the while, of the goodness and tender love of God, especially to orphans and to widows—it was only when I heard him ask me to repeat with him—

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord," that I knew it all. Oh, no need to tell me of it then! I remember, that I seized his two hands in mine with a frantic grasp, that I gazed for one brief moment wildly into his face, and that, as I marked its pitying look, I read the news more plainly than if it had been written in letters of brass; and, so, I turned away, my heart as cold as stone, and laid my head upon my hands, feeling as if I did not care if I never raised it from the table again. I remember, that the doctor came over to me and tried to soothe me, but I would not listen to him. I remember that he took me in his arms quite tenderly and tried to raise me from the table; but, as soon as he released me, I laid my head down again and would not let him comfort me. I almost felt angry with him for endeavouring to console me; for what consolation could I know, what right had I to comfort, and my darling lying stark, and cold, and dead in our little cottage, and I far, far away from his side. Of course I feel that all this was very wrong, and I humbly pray God to pardon me; but, you know, that I was very young, that I had lost my all, and that I had not had time, as yet, to recollect or think of myself.

It was only when the doctor whispered something to me about preparing to go home—oh, where had I a home now, that I recollected myself, and sprang to my feet at once. In their kindness they pressed me to eat and to drink. I swallowed

some water; but, I think, that if I had endeavoured to take a morsel of food, it would have choked me on the spot. One of our humble neighbours had come for me, and when my hasty preparations were completed we set off. I travelled all that day in the inside of the mail, never speaking a word to any one, never shedding a tear, for I had not shed a tear yet, although I felt that I should die if I could not cry soon. I don't remember thinking about anything in particular; but I sat in the farthest corner of the coach, and clenched my hands, and felt as if the life were being *crushed* out of me. When we were about one stage from home, a neighbouring farmer got into the conveyance. It was dark then, and I think he did not perceive me, as I heard him ask my companion when the funeral would be. I could just see my companion raise his hand with a hasty gesture, and point to me, without answering a word, and I tried to shrink still more into my own corner of the coach. Presently it stopped, and I knew that we were there. They lifted me rather than helped me out, and led me towards the house. I remember that several of our neighbours were at the door with sad, solemn faces; and I remember most of all, that our old servant advanced from amongst them, and threw her honest, loving arms about me. Still, I couldn't cry, only I shivered fearfully, and turned away from all of them, even from Mary. They took me in, and tried to lead me up the stairs into an upper

room, but I wouldn't go. I think it was my heart that told me instinctively where *he* was; for I turned aside, and, softly and tremblingly, opened the door of our little parlour.

They had laid him there; there, in the middle of the room, on a bed of snowy whiteness, with candles burning at its foot. I know that they followed me softly, but no one sought to interfere with me, or prevent me, as I went over and turned down, oh, how reverently, the sheet that was over his face. I looked once again, for, as yet, no tears blinded my sight, upon that poor pale face. I don't remember much more now, except that I thought I had never seen him look so beautiful or so happy, never seen so bright a smile upon his countenance. I remember, that, as I gazed, I felt that fearful load which had been crushing and killing me the whole day, moving away from my heart. As I gazed upon him, as he lay before me in the solemn silence of the death room, the words which the doctor had asked me to repeat with him came quite vividly and fresh before my mind, and I tried to repeat them; but I couldn't speak; somehow, I couldn't form the words, although I wished in my heart to do so. I only remember that I threw myself upon the bed and clung about his neck, and tried to lay my face against his own, not caring for the icy coldness that was on it. I only remember that all that I had been suffering all that weary day seemed to come to an end at last, and that the


heavy weight seemed to flit away from my heart, as God in His goodness opened the fountains of my soul, and with one loud cry, I broke out into sobs and bitter, bitter wailing.

They were very good and gentle to me, and they left me by his side a very long time. At length our poor old servant came over to me, and begged of me so piteously, even for his sake, to come away, that I couldn't refuse her. I raised myself from off the bed, and motioned them to bring the candles nearer, that I might look upon him once again. He looked so happy and so peaceful in the solemn light, he seemed to me to smile so fondly on me, as I bent down to kiss him still once more; and the last look I had of him was all so full of gentle and of peaceful memories, that I could not feel sorry when I found, next morning, that they had closed the coffin during the night; so that, living or dead, I never saw my darling's face again.

CHAPTER XII.

WE buried him next day in the little country graveyard by my mother's side, as he had requested. They carried him down from our cottage to the village church, and, although many of our humble neighbours assembled to pay their last tribute of respect to him, for they had all loved him, I was the only one of his kith or kin to follow him to his grave. They tried hard to keep me from going. The doctor, especially, was very earnest with me, and first begged, and then absolutely forbade me to think of attending the sad ceremony; but I put them all aside, gently, indeed, and without looking them in the face, but so firmly that they no longer sought to prevent me when they saw how determined I was; and, when the simple procession started, I placed myself immediately behind the coffin that contained all that remained to me of the treasure of my heart. Oh, how little they knew me, if they supposed that I would ever leave him till the cruel earth should have hidden him for ever from my sight. It was very good of the doctor—he was the same who had always attended me—to keep so close to me, and to put his arm so kindly round me when the great paroxysms of sobs which I couldn't check, shook my frame so that I could hardly follow them,

although, indeed, they walked very slowly. I felt him clasp me tighter still when they let my darling's coffin down into the yawning grave, and I was very thankful for it, for I felt myself falling to the earth, I felt an overwhelming and irresistible desire to throw myself down into his open grave; and I knew that this was wrong and that I ought not to give way to it, only I could not help it. Hence, I was very grateful to my friend that he supported me with his arm, and kept me from showing my weakness before them all. I was more grateful still, that, as the clods fell upon the coffin with that awful, hollow sound, which is never heard save *then*, he drew me to his breast and stifled the fearful cry which burst from me, spite of all my efforts to restrain it, as I felt now how utterly and entirely I was alone, how all that was dear to me in the world had passed away from me for ever. It was very good of him to be so gentle with me—to let me remain so long by *his* grave-side when all was over, and the clergyman was going away—to hold me in his arms so tenderly and yet so firmly, when I struggled yet once more to throw myself into my father's grave. I think that poor old Mary helped him, too, for, I remember seeing her face, and that of several of our neighbours, but in a kind of dreamy way; and, presently, they all seemed to swim before my eyes, as I gave myself up to the stupor which mercifully came upon me. I was only a poor, helpless, orphan boy, with no means of rep



them, no means of making them any return, and it was very good of them all to be so kind, so patient, and so gentle with me.

They took me home, and I went to bed for the first time since my great misfortune had fallen on me. To tell the truth, I was quite wearied out, and was glad to lay my heavy head upon my pillow, and find a few hours' respite from my sorrow before I looked the future that was now before me boldly in the face. I had scarcely lain down in my own little room, when poor old Mary softly entered, and sat down, without speaking a word, by the side of my bed. I was very glad that she did so, for I was very lonely, how lonely, heaven alone knows, and it was a relief to be able to lay my aching head even upon her homely, honest breast, and listen to the soothing words with which she told me (and I had never asked to hear it until now,) how my darling died. He had been much as usual even the very evening before. When she took him in his tea, he made her sit down by the fire, so she told me, with many sobs and broken words, although I knew very well that she was restraining herself as much as ever she could for my sake, and spoke to her a very long time about me. She said that he had all my letters before him at the time, and that, once or twice, he laid his head upon the table, with his face upon them, and she heard him more than once, in a low, broken voice, begging God to be a father to his boy. She thought that he was more

than usually depressed in spirits that evening, but that was all. At last he took my letters, and, tying them together, kissed them over and over again, ere he replaced them in his desk. When she was leaving the room, and bidding him good night, he took her ever so affectionately by the hand (so she went on to tell me, when she could find her speech, for at this point she fairly broke down for a few seconds), and thanked her with tender and grateful words for all her care of him, of his young wife, and, most of all, for her never-failing love and service to his motherless boy. "Oh, Mary," were the last words she heard him say, as he held her hand as if he would never let it go, "oh, Mary, may God be a father to my poor, poor boy, when I am gone."

These were the last words she ever heard him speak; and, although it nearly broke my heart to listen to her, still, no one can ever tell how great a comfort it was to me in my crushing sorrow to know that the last words which my darling ever uttered to human being, were words which told full well his never-dying love, and thought, and care for me.

She let me sob and cry without restraint for a few minutes, and then she went on:—"When I knocked at his door, as usual, in the morning," she resumed, "and there was no answer, I got frightened, and looked into his room. He was in his bed, and seemed to be asleep. I called to him several times, and, when he gave no sign of waking,

I went over to his side. There was no need to put my hand upon his face, for I saw at once that he was cold and dead, and, in truth, so the doctor said, he had died without pain or struggle in his sleep, hours before I went to call him."

She had no more to tell me, but this was enough. She drew my streaming face to her breast, and pillowed it there; and, as she swayed backwards and forwards, hushed me all the while, as she had done when I was but a little child. "Oh, maister, maister," I heard her wail, in her strong, north country dialect, "it were a bitter day for me when I saw thee stiff and stark afore me. Nay, honey, honey," she expostulated quickly, as I cried aloud in my uncontrollable grief, "oh, dunna tak on so, or thou'll brek my heart, thou wilt. Lay thee head upon my breast, my poor bairn, and tak comfort, for thou knows that God, who watches over t' birds of t'air, will never forget thee; but He'll be a Feyther to thee, now that He's ta'en thy own poor feyther to His'sell."

And so, with homely words like these, words which came fraught with priceless comfort from the depths of her simple, honest heart, she sat and hushed me till my head fell back, and in very weariness of mind and body I sank to sleep.

When I was dressing next morning I determined to be very brave, and face my troubles like a man. My head ached sadly; but after I had bathed it in the cold water it felt somewhat better. I experienced a strange feeling, too; yet one

which, strange though it was, did not surprise me. It was a feeling as if ten years had been all at once added to my life—as if all at once, without any intermediate transition, I had from the thoughtless, impulsive, and romantic boy of yesterday, been transformed into the quiet, sober, and down-cast man of to-day. It was the presence of this feeling, all vague and undefinable as it was, which made me, I think, walk about my room this morning with such a solemn and measured step—which made me, as I looked into my glass, almost expect to find myself with the marks of age upon me already, and caused me to feel somewhat disappointed to see that my face of this morning was the face of yesterday, except that it was a good deal paler than usual, and that my eyes were very red. It was the presence of this feeling, I am quite sure, which made me determine to act like a man and be firm, as I threw open my chamber door and prepared to descend. They had opened the doors and the windows, and the fresh breeze of the autumn morning was blowing freely through the house which had been for the last few days so dark and close. I mechanically, as it were, entered our little parlour, and the first object that met my gaze was *his* empty chair; and then all my resolves to be so firm were scattered as easily as the morning breezes which were flitting through the room; and when poor old Mary found me some half hour later, I was on my knees, my face buried in the cushions of the chair.


weeping more bitterly than ever; I say more bitterly than ever, because, as before I had wept to relieve the fearful load of sorrow that was crushing me to the earth, I wept now because I realized to the full, and in all the extent of its bitterness, the irreparable loss which I had sustained: because I realized now, in all its startling nakedness, the bitter fact that the soft and gentle tones of my darling's voice were for ever hushed, that the loving eye was for ever closed, that the sage counsel and the earnest exhortation would never more fall from his lips; that for good or for evil I must enter on the uncertain path before me all alone, with no one, save God, to direct my steps, no one to cheer me when I stumbled and grew faint, no one to

sympathise and rejoice with me when the sun of brighter fortunes might shine down upon me. And thus all my brave resolutions flitted away from me at the mere sight of my father's empty chair; and so for two or three days more I wandered about in a dazed kind of a way, speaking to no one, scarcely eating or drinking, but for ever thinking, thinking, thinking of my darling who was sleeping his long, last sleep in the little graveyard in the distance—thinking of all that had been, weeping for what was, trembling at the thought of what was to come.

The arrival of a kind and fatherly letter from my dear old friend, the doctor, some three or four days after the funeral of my father, recalled

me to myself. The good old man advised me, as soon as our little affairs were settled, to return to school, until I should determine upon my future course. Heaven knows, there was not much to settle. We found that my father had left a little paper, containing an account of his affairs, and begging of his friend, the medical doctor to whom I have alluded, to see them arranged, for his sake. I have already mentioned that my father's annuity ceased with his life. I know very well how anxious he had been, by dint of rigid economy, to make some provision for me, but what with the expenses of my education, and the cost of our excursions to the South of France, first on my account and then on his own, he had been utterly unable to do so; and I can understand how it must have added to his pain when he found himself so visibly sinking in health, to know that I should be left almost entirely unprovided for. But I know, too, that he did all in his power—nay, almost more than was in his power—to make some provision for me; and if he had left me without a copper in my pocket, or a shoe to my feet, I should not have loved him one iota less, nor have cherished one degree less fondly the thought of him whom in life I loved more than all the world else; and whose memory, now that he is gone, is the dearest treasure which I have, or ever can possess.

To be brief, we sold the furniture of our little cottage; and, indeed, I must say, that I believe our



humble friends and neighbours purchased many of the articles at much more than their real value, in order to swell the fund for "the poor feytherless and motherless bairn." When the doctor's bill and the costs of the funeral had been discharged, the sum of ready money, which remained at my disposal, was, in truth, but small. I tried my best to make poor old Mary divide this sum with me. If she had done so, after my half yearly bill should have been discharged at school, I should have been penniless, but all my entreaties could not induce her to take a single farthing. "Nay, nay, none so," she said, in answer to all my entreaties. "None so. Thank God she had her hands to wark wi', and she had her sister's 'ouse to bide in, and she wad none rob a feytherless bairn, not she, God forbid, and keep her frae sae deadly a crime; but she wad e'en wark for her bread like other decent folk, and when her darling had a 'ouse of his ain, she'd come and keep it for him as she'd done for his feyther afore him, and that were all she asked;" and, I thank God, it was in my house, in peace and plenty, that poor old Mary laid her down to die at last.

We arranged between us that she was to go to her sister's house. I had no doubt but that she would be comfortable. Her sister was married to a respectable farmer, and Mary, with her tidy and thrifty habits, would be of great service to them in their household affairs. I knew that they would be delighted to have her with them, and

this was a great load taken from my mind. They were scarcely less kind to me; the honest, bluff, old farmer, with many bows and scrapes, and uncouth attempts at good breeding (but what did I care for that, for they were the expressions of a genuine and honest heart), begging of me to keep in mind, "that while they had a crust o' bread in their 'ouse, I were heartily welcome to half of it, that I were; aye, as welcome as a king; if I wad only condescend to break it wi' em in their homely way;" whilst his stout and matronly dame was not less profuse in her exclamations, that "she wad never turn her back on a puir, motherless bairn—no, not she." I felt their honest, homely kindness very much, more than I can express; but, indeed, I can only repeat what I have said before, that during the whole of this my great trouble, they were all very kind, and very gentle, and very patient with me. I will add, that were I very weary, very sick, or very much in want of comfort, I don't know any people to whom I would so readily turn my steps, and with such assurance of finding all that I stood in need of, as to my honest, homely friends in that little out-of-the-way village in the North of Yorkshire.

Our cottage was stripped at last, and on the morrow I was to set out on my return to Doctor Searchall's. I need scarcely say, that my last walk was to the village graveyard; still less need I dwell upon the feelings that were swelling in my breast, as I knelt down upon the sod and kissed,

for the last time the grass that was already growing upon my darling's grave, as once again I renewed my firm resolve, that never thought, or word, or act of mine should, with God's help, be such as would have brought one moment's sorrow to his loving heart. I rose at last and left him there—left him sleeping in peace and quiet by my mother's side—and turned my face to the world that was waiting for me, all uncertain of the lot that was before me; certain but of one thing, that, wherever I might bend my way, I should never find a truer, faithful, or more loving heart, than the one which I left, cold and dead, behind me, in the keeping of the tomb.

PART II.


IN THE SHADE

“ So many great
Illustrious spirits have convers'd with woe,
Have in her school been taught, as are enough
To consecrate distress, and make ambition
Ev'n wish the frown beyond the smile of fortune.”



CHAPTER I.

As I knew very well that I could not afford to remain any longer at school, I was anxious to leave at once, but the old doctor, like all the rest of them, was very good to me. When I timidly offered him out of my little store what I calculated would be the amount of my account for the period which I had been at school since the last time of reckoning, I think the old man's eyes filled with tears, as he gently put my hand aside, repeating the while, the self-same words which my more humble friends had used, to the effect, that God forbid that he should take the poor orphan's mite. And, in truth, it was very good and very considerate of him; for, if he had taken what was but justly his due, I should have been left almost penniless. I deem it right to mention this fact, in order that those who may have heard so much about the utter heartlessness and rapacity of Yorkshire schoolmasters, may know that there are, at least, two sides to the picture. Nor, did the doctor's kindness stop here. He assured me in the most fatherly and hearty manner, that I should render him only too happy by making his house my home, and continuing my studies, free of expense, till



such time as I should be able to settle upon some state of life. I was deeply grateful for his kindness, and the memory of it is fresh in my heart even to-day, but I could not listen to his proposal. I was too proud and too independent by nature to submit to eat the bread of charity, and I begged of the doctor to exercise his benevolence in procuring me a situation amongst some of his many friends. I did not care what it might be so long as it was not beyond my strength. As to the rest I was indifferent, only that I craved to be about something, something which would at least enable me to earn my bread, and not leave me dependent for it, even for a moment longer than was necessary. Perhaps it was that my mind had scarcely recovered its healthy tone after the shock which I had sustained, or, it may have been, that God was shaping out in His own mysterious way, the wondrous course which my coming life was to take; but, at all events, what was certain, was, that I felt strangely indifferent as to my future calling, strangely uninterested as to the situation which the doctor might procure for me, provided that he only procured me *something*, and that quickly. The learned professions were necessarily out of the question, for I had no means of prosecuting my studies; and, when, in the course of two or three weeks the doctor informed me that he had procured me a situation in the counting-house of a London merchant, I was very grateful to him for his kindness, but I felt quite indifferent in

regard to the appointment itself. However, "indifferent," perhaps, does not express my meaning, for I at once eagerly accepted the appointment. I should have said, "without interest,"—that would have expressed my meaning better. I felt that it was one of the last things to which my mind would naturally have turned, and, therefore, I felt no interest in it; but, at the same time, I felt equally that it would do as well as anything else, and, therefore, I accepted it, and, under the circumstances, accepted it eagerly. I was all anxiety to start at once, but here the doctor would have his own way, and I was obliged to submit; I was not to enter on my new duties until Christmas, and the intervening time the doctor insisted upon my spending with him. When Christmas came, I accompanied him on his usual visit to London, and was by him introduced to my new master, Mr. Smith, of the firm of "Smith, Jones, and Smith." As far as I ever discovered, Mr. Smith represented, in his own person, the three individuals who were supposed to compose the firm; for I believe that neither I, nor any one else of our day ever saw or heard of Mr. Jones or the other Mr. Smith. There may have been, of course, such persons, in the firm at some former period, but they had been forgotten if they ever existed, and Mr. Smith, or, as he was usually called, Smith, Jones, and Smith, ruled with no rival near his throne in my day. Perhaps it is ill-natured in me to begin at once by criticising,

my new master; but I must confess that Mr. Smith wasn't a pleasant man to look at, nor a man who would carry captive the affections of your heart by his first appearance. His face was very red and very fat, and had an appearance of perpetual suffocation about it, which resulted, I suppose, from the appalling tightness and stiffness of his cravat. I have no reason to doubt that he had eyes in the aforesaid face, and very sharp eyes, too, as I subsequently discovered; but, what with the natural smallness of those organs, and the puffy substance in which they were embedded, together with a pair of gold spectacles which he wore, I never saw them with sufficient distinctness to be able to testify to their colour or their shape. He had not much hair remaining on his head, but the little he had was pushed up until it resembled the quills of a porcupine, whilst one of those extraordinary frills, which our grandfathers wore to the front of their shirts, added still more to the sharpness and angularity of his general appearance. In fact, he looked as if he might impale you, if you happened to run against him suddenly, or approach him without due caution. His voice was as harsh and pompous as his step was loud and authoritative, and I fancy that a king could scarcely walk down his palace with a more monarch-of-all-I-survey air, than Smith, Jones, and Smith put on when he made his appearance in the office every morning regularly as the clock struck eleven. For anything I know he may have been a very


nice gentleman when at home in the bosom of his family, although, judging from the scared, timid look which I plainly saw on the face of Mrs. Smith, Jones, and Smith, as I showed her into the counting-house on several occasions, when she called to see her lord and master at his place of business, I should be inclined to doubt even of this. However, I am not going to conduct you, into the hidden corners of Smith, Jones, and Smith's nature; all I wish to convey is, that Mr. Smith wasn't a pleasant man to look at, nor a pleasant man to speak to, and this I assert, and assert emphatically.

It was a great change and a great trial to me, Heaven knows, to have to lay aside at once, and, as it seemed, for ever, all the loftier aspirations of my heart for the drudgery and the wearisome routine of a merchant's office; to leave my poetry and my favourite authors for the long interminable lines of £ s. d., which nearly drove me mad; but there was no remedy, and so I did my best to take to it like a man, to take to it patiently at least, if not cheerfully, for *his* sake, and because I knew that this is what he would have wished; but, in very truth, my soul sickened at the uncongenial work, and the uncongenial companions amongst whom I was thrown, and for some weeks it was as much as ever I could do to *force* myself to submit to it, more than I could do to control the fits of fierce and bitter crying which would, when I was alone, often overpower me and carry me out of myself.

I think I had been in London about a couple of months, and was becoming somewhat reconciled to my new state of life, and to the noise and bustle of the great city, when one evening, as I was resting after the fatigues of the day, and with my mind, as usual, hundreds of miles away in the village graveyard, there came a loud double-knock at the door of my humble lodgings, which rather startled my landlady, I imagine, for I heard her hurry off at full speed to answer the summons. I listened with some little curiosity to learn who my visitor, who announced himself in such style, might be; for I had not been long enough in London to have formed any acquaintances. I may add, that I had had no inclination to do so; for my fellow-clerks were certainly not of the class from which I could have made friends. My surmises were, however, speedily set at rest. I heard the sound of a dear and well-known voice, a voice which caused my heart to thrill with pleasure and delight. I rushed to the door to throw it open, and, in a moment more, my dear old friend, Charley Morley, with his cheerful, ruddy face, and his honest blue eyes, was in my arms.

It was but a short time, comparatively speaking, since we had seen each other; but, nevertheless, such a change had taken place in my affairs since then, and, moreover, it was such a pleasure in my loneliness to look upon a familiar face, and to hear the tones of a friendly and sympathetic voice, that I was almost beside myself

with joy as I stood holding Charley by both hands and looking into his face. He, dear fellow, was equally delighted to see me, and it was some considerable time before, having got through our greetings and demonstrations of affection, we were able to sit down and talk like two rational beings. They had only returned from the Continent, he said, a few days before, and had then heard, for the first time, of my great loss. This was the first time Charley had alluded to it, and, now he said no more; but, as I turned my head aside to hide the gush of tears which his words called forth, as the memory of my loss rushed back upon me in all its freshness, he came over to me, and put his arms about me, and drew me to his heart; and we understood one another better than any words could have helped us to do. After a while, when I had recovered my composure, he went on to tell me that they had discovered my whereabouts from Dr. Searchall, and had hurried up to London at once to find me. The colonel had decreed that Charley was to continue his studies for several years longer; not, indeed, with the view of his embracing any profession, for his means would be very ample, but "to keep him out of mischief," as his father expressed it; and Charley had determined, this part of the business having been left entirely to his own choice, he read a course of law, in order, as he laughingly put it, that he might become a regular Solon, and a terror to all the poachers and




evil doers on his estate. "I was to have begun at Easter, but when I heard what had happened, and where you were," he said, in his old hearty way, "I was determined to begin at once, and so, here I am, your faithful friend, old fellow, for evermore." He then proceeded, in his merry, boisterous manner, to take a survey of my lodgings, which he concluded by informing me were "not the thing at all, and wouldn't do." It was well for my landlady's peace of mind, if she were at all sensitive on the point, that she did not hear the epithets he lavished on her rooms; and he finished by informing me, all in a breath, that there was a second bed-room in his suite of apartments, and that I was to pack up at once and come away with him, as he had fully made up his mind that we were to live together, and share the same rooms. I felt my dear friend's kindness very much, more, indeed, than I had felt anything since my darling's death, but, of course, I demurred to the proposed arrangement. My lodgings were certainly of a very humble character, but they were the best which my circumstances justified me in taking, and I was far too proud to place myself under an obligation to any one, even to one whom I loved so dearly as I did Charley Morley. I, therefore, represented, as delicately as I could, that the proposed arrangement was entirely out of the question, and that, although I was delighted beyond measure to have him in London, and should find my greatest plea-

sure in being in his company, still, that I could not consent to share his lodgings with him, for the very simple reason that they were, doubtless, too expensive to suit my limited means, and that I could not afford to pay my fair share of the cost of them.

In any other circumstances I should certainly have been amused to watch the perplexed appearance of Charley's honest face as I proposed my objections to him. He protested that he didn't understand one word of it, that he believed that I didn't care for him, and that if I persisted in my obstinacy he would never speak to me again, and a great deal more to the same effect. I stopped his mouth with my hand, and would not let him go on; and the next moment he was clasping me in his arms, begging my pardon, and reproaching himself as a hot-headed and unfeeling fellow. Still, he wouldn't give up his point about the lodgings; and all I could effect was, that the matter should be referred to his father and mother, who were both in town, and waiting at the hotel for us. I was ready to accompany him in an instant, for I needed no inducement to hurry me away to meet such valued friends.

We were soon there, and I found them kinder to me than ever. The colonel appeared to me to look both ill and old, and, as he took my hands in his, that strange sensation which I always experienced, when meeting him after any little period of absence, ran through me. It passed

away, however, in an instant, and I scarcely heeded it. I need hardly say that Mrs. Morley's greeting was more motherly and more affectionate than ever, still less, need I say how the sight of her dear, sympathizing face unloosed the fountains of my soul, and how glad I was to lay my head upon her mother's breast, and listen to her soothing words of love, and hope, and resignation to the will of God. I saw the colonel turn aside and lay his face upon his arms as they rested on the mantelpiece; and, when at length he raised his countenance, I thought it looked more worn and pale than ever. In their kindness and their delicacy they didn't annoy me with many words, but left me to myself, except that every now and then *she* stroked my hair, or kissed me on the brow, and presently I came round. They questioned me on every point, and when they found how I was employed, the colonel spoke out quite loudly, and declared that I must leave it at once. When I answered, gently, but very firmly, that this could not be, he proceeded to combat my objections with so much earnestness, and pressed his offers of assistance upon me so warmly and so persistently, that I was both pained and astonished. When they saw, at length, that I was quite determined to receive assistance from no one, they desisted, at least for the present; first, however, having made me promise that if I should ever change my mind I would at once apply to them. The tones of the colonel's voice



.. especially, were strangely earnest as he made me promise this. As for me, I was truly grateful, I may say, that I was overpowered by their kindness, but my mind was quite made up on the matter. Moreover, although, I felt no interest in what I was at, still, I had no desire for change—no desire for anything else, no wish to exchange it for any other pursuit. They were all alike indifferent to me; and, hence, I was confirmed in my determination to receive help from no one, but to earn, by my own hand's toil, the bread which kept me in life.

Of course, too, it was not very long before the question of the lodgings was started again. They insisted, and I as firmly refused to submit, although I felt well enough, how pleasant the proposed arrangement would be to me, and how happy Charley and I would, doubtless, be together. Still my pride would not allow me to give in. Colonel Morley urged, in his own collected and somewhat stiff but withal kind manner how much pleasure it would give him to have Charley and me living together, and what company we should be to one another, and concluded by urging me to remember that Charley's rooms were already taken, that they comprised a sitting and two bedrooms, one of which would only be left unoccupied, if I refused to gratify them all by acceding to their request. I perceived plainly enough that he was becoming somewhat annoyed with me for persisting in my refusal, and the thought was very

painful to me, for he had been so kind to me that it really hurt me very much to do anything which could in any way displease him. However, I *could* not bring myself to give in, although my eyes were full of tears, and my voice became very weak and indistinct, as I continued to urge my objections and beg of them to spare me. I don't know how long the contest might have continued if it had not been brought to a very unexpected termination. Colonel Morley finding that he did not break down my resolutions, desisted from his attempt after one or two efforts, and, rising from his seat, walked from the room followed by Charley. I was left alone with Mrs. Morley, and, I may add, that I was already virtually defeated. She beckoned me to come over and sit by her side on the sofa. When I had done so she began to urge the point in her own simple, loving way, stroking my hair the while, and kissing me on the forehead. "Did I love her?" she asked, "did I love her as a mother?" "Did I remember the Christmas eve when I promised that I would let her take the place of my own dead mother, and was I going to break my promise *now*; and how could I say that I loved her if I would not grant her the first favour which she had ever asked of me? Did I believe that my darling father, who was gone, would have wished me to refuse her this favour?" Of course no reasoning could withstand an argument of this nature, and the end of it was, that I managed

to get out some inarticulate sentences to the effect that I did love her with all my heart, and that she might do as she wished with me, merely stipulating, that I might be allowed to pay as much towards my share of Charley's lodgings as I was now paying for the accommodation afforded to to me by Mrs. —, I really forget her name, suppose we say Harris, my present landlady.

I was getting well on in my teens when this happened, and becoming rather ashamed of being caught in tears; I confess, however, that my eyes were very suspiciously damp after this interview, and I was drying them as fast as I could, when Charley re-entered the room. When he learned that I had been beaten and given in, he danced round me with pleasure, and the rest of the evening was occupied in pleasant chat about our future mode of proceeding, Mrs. Morley, of course, loading us with sage advice relative to our domestic arrangements and the management of Mrs. Brown, our new landlady. As soon as tea was over we all set off to visit the lodgings which had been already taken by Mrs. Morley. They consisted of a suite of rooms, a delightful sitting-room which was to serve as our dining-room, drawing-room, and whatever else might be required of it, a kind of little ante-room, where we could deposit our hats, sticks, and other etceteras, and a couple of snug sleeping-rooms. They were all very nicely furnished, and of a style far superior to the accommodation with which I had already provided.

myself. I need scarcely say, that Mrs. Brown, our landlady, dilated with considerable volubility on each and every elegance and accommodation with which our apartments were provided as she conducted us over them. I need not, neither do I intend, to trouble my readers with some rather strong and by no means flattering remarks to which I was treated by my late landlady, whose name I forget, and whom we agreed to call by the historic appellation of "Harris," when I went to remove my goods and worldly appurtenances from my old to my new quarters. The remarks to which I allude were not addressed directly to myself, but to another lady on the opposite side of the street, and bore reference to people's not knowing their own minds, and taking other people's lodgings, and putting said people to all manner of trouble, and then going off like mean, shabby things, &c., &c. I tried, whilst my little property was being conveyed to the cab, to shut my ears as much as possible to these somewhat unpleasant remarks; but, as I have already said, as they were carried on across the street, and as the ladies in question pitched their respective voices in their loudest and shrillest key, I was obliged to listen to a great deal more than was either complimentary or pleasant. However, this trial, like all other trials, was soon over. I bade "Mrs. Harris" good day with the best grace I was able, and received but a very cool, in fact, I may say, withering response, which caused me to drive

away, feeling very much ashamed of myself, and giving me no reason to believe that I was followed by the benedictions of that amiable lady.

Charley and I began our housekeeping at once, Mrs. Morley remaining in town a few days to put us into the way of managing our little domestic concerns; and, during this time, Mrs. Brown was everything that we could desire—the very essence of amiability and kindness. Before Mrs. Morley left town the apartments were engaged for six months, and it was only after her departure that we began to find out that Mrs. Brown was not all sweetness, but that she had tendencies of a decidedly vixenish and overbearing nature. However, Charley and I together were more than a match for her, and, one way or another, we managed to keep the upper hand of her.

Thus, a couple of years passed away pleasantly enough. As the freshness of my grief for my great loss began to wear off, I applied myself to business with all the vigour at my command. My heart wasn't in it, but I did my best to discharge my duty faithfully, and I was rising rapidly in the estimation of my employers, if I might judge from the substantial manner in which my services were rewarded. In a very short time I was able to pay my fair share of the cost of our lodgings, and this, in spite of all Charley's remonstrances, I insisted upon doing. There was one great drawback to my happiness and it was this:—Gradually I began to be afraid that Charley was becoming

rather wild, and was getting mixed up with, if not a bad, at least a dangerous set. I had no very tangible grounds for coming to these conclusions; but, somehow or other, I began to feel uneasy on his account; although when I looked into his honest face, I used to be almost ashamed of myself for even suspecting him, and I strove to banish such thoughts from my mind as infinitely injurious to my friend; but, do as I would, after a time they came back again with redoubled intensity, filling me with a kind of an indefinable anxiety for which I could give no satisfactory reason to myself, and yet, which, strive as I would, I could not altogether banish from my mind.

CHAPTER II.

TIME wore on, and when Charley and I had been about three years together, a circumstance occurred which separated us; and, strange as it may seem, I could not help being glad that it so happened. Charley's course of law was complete. I am afraid that his attention to study had not been of a very close character, and I doubt very much whether he knew sufficient law to be able to convict one of the poachers about whom he had talked so much. Still, his course was complete, and Colonel and Mrs Morley, who were about to visit the South of Europe for a considerable period, requested Charley to accompany them. There were several reasons for this determination on their part. One was, the colonel's failing health. Another, and I believe their principal one, was to remove Charley from the society of the friends whom he had picked up during his residence in London. He was very much annoyed at the proposal, and, I firmly believe, that if he had dared he would absolutely have refused to comply with his father's request. He stood, however, too much in awe of the colonel to dare to do this; but he obeyed with the very worst grace, and with a bit-

terness of spirit which I was very sorry to observe in him, for several reasons; first, because I was afraid that it might be the commencement of a serious misunderstanding between him and his father—and I knew them both well enough to be convinced that such a misunderstanding between persons of their respective temperament might, and probably would, be productive of the most serious consequences; secondly, because I foresaw much grief and suffering for the dear and gentle woman whom I loved as my own mother, and whom the more I knew of her the better I loved; and, lastly, because all this only served to confirm the uneasiness and apprehensions with which, for some time past, I had regarded Charley's conduct and mode of acting, and made me feel more and more convinced that his repugnance to the proposed arrangement arose from the fact that his liberty would be thus considerably curtailed.

During the three years which Charley and I had spent together, the Colonel and Mrs. Morley had seldom allowed more than a few months to elapse without running up to town to see us; and I, having obtained the requisite leave of absence from Smith, Jones, and Smith, had also on one occasion spent several weeks at Morley House. Although I had persistently refused all the offers of assistance which they had continued to press upon me, I did not appreciate their kindness the

less on that account; and I can safely say that I was truly and deeply attached to them, as well for their own sakes as because they were the parents of my dearest friend. They had taken me, too, deeply into their confidence; and although, indeed, it was but seldom that the colonel unbent so far as to speak on matters of this nature, I knew very well that they were both miserable and seriously alarmed at the unhappy tendencies which poor Charley had begun to evince. For their sakes and for his, I had striven to screen, and when that was impossible, to palliate as much as I could the faults of my friend; but, in my heart of hearts, I knew that there was but too much ground for their apprehensions; and, although I could never have thought that I should have lived to have seen the day, I could not help feeling glad at our approaching separation.

In truth, at the end of our third year in London, Charley and I, although we still occupied the same lodgings, had become considerably estranged. Less and less of his leisure time was spent with me, and more and more of it devoted to the wild companions into whose society he had unfortunately fallen; and who, imposing upon his good nature, were, I was firmly convinced, leading him more and more astray. I was grieved to the heart at this, for I knew better, perhaps, than any one else, his really noble nature, and I was full of sorrow to see how it was being imposed upon. And what, perhaps, troubled me more

than all, was, that those false friends of his were evidently poisoning his mind against myself, and destroying my influence over him. When I had first begun to perceive that Charley was going astray, I need scarcely say that I had spoken to him with all the freedom which our long and intimate friendship warranted me in using; and, as the strongest argument which I could adduce, I had spoken to him of his own dear, gentle mother and her priceless love. I had begged of him with all the fervour of my heart to withdraw in time from courses which must inevitably end in ruin; and I had asked him if the friendship of all these gay companions of his would compensate for one tear of sorrow which he might bring to that mother's eye. Poor Charley! For a long time he listened to me in the best possible spirit, confessed that he was a wild fellow, but protested that I magnified his little failings beyond all due measure, and ended by clasping me in his arms and vowing that I was the dearest and the best friend that ever lived; and for a week after this he never went out on an evening, or, at least, not except I was with him, and we were as happy as ever. But, by degrees, I found that he became impatient at my remarks, and listened to them every day with more and more constraint, nay, even went so far as to resent my interference in his affairs; and, of course, when I perceived this, naturally enough, I grew more chary of proffering advice which was so ill received; and, once or twice when I had

remained up far into the night waiting his return, and he came home in a state which it wrung my heart to witness, he had answered my expostulations with such rudeness and passionate vituperation that, if I had loved him and his mother one iota less, or been less convinced that I was of his really noble nature, and that his heart was yet all right at the bottom, I should never have spoken to him again on the subject, and should have left him to himself and his own courses, once and for ever. But I loved him far too well for this. I had too much concern for the gentle woman who had acted such a motherly part to me; and I determined that so long as an effort of mine might be of use to rescue her son, it should be exerted to its utmost in his favour. I had such confidence in his nature that I was convinced that if he could only be separated from the evil influences under which he was labouring that he would come right again in the end. How little, however, did I imagine the means by which this separation would be brought about! For these reasons and for a thousand others I still clung to him long after our relations had ceased to be of a nature which could render our living together very pleasant. Moreover, in his better moments (and at his very worst, poor Charley had many of these better moments), he was so frank, so noble, so affectionate, that I easily forgave him the rest.

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 had for days previously thought of this parting,
 and had composed, in my mind at least, a set and
 elaborate speech which I would make to Charley,

now existed between Charley and myself, you will not be surprised when I say that I felt it in the shape of a considerable relief to find that we must separate through necessity, as it were, and without having had a positive rupture. I felt that it must have come to that in the end, and I was very glad to be spared the pain of any such occurrence. When I say that I felt glad to leave him, you must not suppose, dear reader, that I am insinuating that I had lost one tittle of my love and regard for him. You will, I am sure, easily understand, from the consideration of the circumstances, how, without having lost any of my affection for him, or interest in his welfare, I still felt glad to be separated from him, at least partially; for, after all, we should often see each other, and the separation would be at the most but partial; and I was very much inclined to hope and believe that when we saw each other less seldom that my remonstrances might have more effect upon him from that very circumstance. At all events, although the thought was in itself infinitely painful to me, there was no use in attempting to conceal or stifle it, and I *did* look upon the coming separation in the light of a relief. As for Charley, I believe that he really viewed it in the same manner, although he protested, and I gave him credit for all sincerity, that the separation would be very painful to him, and that nothing but the command of his father should force him to submit to it.

When the day came on which we were to leave Mrs. Brown's roof for good and all (for, as I had no occasion for four rooms, and Mrs. Brown did not wish to spoil her "let," as she styled it, by separating them, I had taken a couple of apartments elsewhere), Charley and I ate our breakfast together for the last time in silent sadness. Scarce a word passed between us. Our boxes and other personal effects were littered about the room waiting to be removed, and they gave it a very desolate appearance indeed. We had scarcely finished our melancholy breakfast, when the cab which was to convey Charley and his worldly possessions to the coach in which he was to travel to Morley House drove up. We bustled about and got the things out, striving, by this means, to keep down the feelings which were swelling within both our breasts. Neither of us attempted to speak, for, at the first word which we should have endeavoured to utter, we should inevitably have broken down. But at last the moment came. His luggage had all been removed to the cab. Mrs. Brown was waiting at the hall door to give a last greeting to her late lodger, and we instinctively felt that there was no further excuse for delay. We looked round the room once or twice, looked, as it were involuntarily into one another's faces, and the same instant were sobbing in one another's arms. I had for days previously thought of this parting, and had composed, in my mind at least, a set and elaborate speech which I would make to Charley,

full of sage advice and friendly remonstrance; but, as I felt how the poor dear fellow strained me to his breast, as I felt his cheek pressed against my own, and listened to his sobs and cries, every word of it vanished from my mind and left me powerless to speak. The remembrance of the pain he had given me, and the rough words with which he had sometimes met my friendly expostulations, was all gone—gone in an instant—and, as I held him in my arms, I could only think of him as the friend of my boyish days—the blue-eyed, ruddy-cheeked boy who had stood so faithfully to me through all the vicissitudes of Dr. Searchall's seminary for young gentlemen. I could only think of him as of the son of his mother—that faithful, loving, true-hearted woman—and the only expostulation or remonstrance which I could address to him found vent in a very few simple words, but I dare say they were more effective than the longest speech which I could have made him.

“Oh, Charley, Charley,” I managed to get out between the sobs which nearly choked me, “Charley, my dear fellow, do, for God's sake, think of your poor mother.”

He made no answer, but he strained me to his breast with an energy far more expressive than any words, and in a moment more he was gone.

I listened to the sound of the wheels as it grew fainter and fainter, and, then, for a few brief seconds, I know that I laid my head upon my

arms, as they rested on the table, and cried bitterly, bitterly as a *man* alone can cry, for the cloud that had come between me and Charley Morley. My tears were quickly dried, however, and for a few moments more I yielded myself up to the rush of thoughts which crowded through my brain—that feeling of relief which I had so often felt of late, mingled with the more tender thoughts of days gone by—of sorrow for the shadow that had fallen upon a noble heart and warped it aside to vices which so disgraced it, and the resolve, stronger and more firm than ever, to stand to the last by my boyhood's friend, to do my utmost to rescue him from the meshes in which he had become so miserably entangled. Then I was at Morley House again, and I felt the motherly hand gently stroking my hair aside that she might kiss me on the brow, as she murmured something about “the poor motherless boy—the poor motherless boy;” and, if any inducement had been wanting to urge me on to do my utmost for my friend for his own sake alone, it would surely have been supplied by the remembrance of his mother's love and affection for myself.

My reverie was quickly broken in upon by the arrival of the vehicle which was to convey me to my new lodgings. In a few minutes my luggage was safely stowed away, and I was standing at the door, shaking hands with Mrs. Brown, whose eyes were certainly very moist, and who seemed really sorry to part from us. I bade her

a hasty farewell, and, jumping into the cab, drove rapidly away amid a volley of good wishes and complimentary expressions having reference to my genteelness and steadiness, on the part of my landlady, which my modesty absolutely forbids me to repeat.

CHAPTER III.

THE course of this simple narrative now leads me to an incident which I cannot pass over, and, yet, which I wish to touch as lightly as possible—not because I deem it unimportant, or of little interest to me, but, on the contrary, because it concerns myself most intimately, and because it treats of what I consider the most momentous action of my life—an action at once so sacred and so holy as to make me anxious, out of very respect, to say as little as possible about it. Besides, I am not the hero of this tale. At all events, I have no desire of appearing as such; and, as up to this, I have endeavoured to say as little as possible of myself, so I shall be more and more careful in what remains to be said, to keep myself as much as ever I can in the back-ground. Hence, whenever you find me speaking of myself, I beg you, courteous reader, to give me credit for doing so, for no other reason than because the narrative which I have in hand requires it of me.

I saw my friends start for the continent on the appointed day, and I can say that I returned to my desk, after seeing them off, with a heavy heart, my sorrow, however, being a good deal lessened

by the hope of hearing from them very frequently during their absence. When they had gone, I felt very lonely, and the ledgers of Smith, Jones, and Smith, grew more distasteful to me than ever. However, I stuck close to my business, and worked away as well as I could, hoping for better, or, at all events, happier times; and, all at once, when I least expected it, the darkness cleared away from my feet, my path opened out bright and clear before me, the mercy of God came down upon me in such overpowering abundance that all that I could do was to throw myself in silent adoration before the throne of His Majesty, and confess in my inmost soul, that in very truth His mercies are above all His works. In other words, and to speak plainly, some few months after the departure of my friends for the continent, it pleased God, in His infinite mercy and without any merit, almost without any direct action of mine, to take me from out of the midst of an unbelieving people, and lead me into the safe and pleasant places of His own most holy Catholic Church.

How all this was brought about I can scarcely realize to myself, even now. In fact, I seldom seek to enquire into it. I am only too happy to have to confess that God was good to me far beyond my deserts, and why should I loose my time in striving to penetrate into the wonderful dealings of the Creator with His creature? He *might* have brought me into His Church through the

agency of a sick bed, through long interviews and deep disputations with learned controversialists, or, in many other equally obvious ways. If it pleased His infinite wisdom to employ much simpler agencies, and much simpler means in my particular case, all that remains for me is to adore that wisdom which dealt so simply, but so sweetly, and so efficaciously with me, and do my best to correspond with the great grace which was vouchsafed to me.

At the period of which I write I was nearly one and twenty years of age. Up to this time I can scarcely say of myself that I had been a very religious youth. The secluded way in which I had been brought up when young, the exhortations of my father, which I never forgot, and, perhaps, my natural constitution, had united in preserving me from falling into any great disorders. I went to church regularly, I said my prayers night and morning, I was scrupulously just and honest in all my dealings, I discharged my duty as faithfully as I was able to my employer; but, beyond this, my views on religious matters were of the dimmest and most indistinct. I had no defined notions of dogma—how could I—when, probably, the ideas of those under whom I sat on Sunday, and who were supposed to be my spiritual teachers, were quite as misty as my own! My soul had never been awakened to that quick perception of spiritual things which the living grace of God can alone impart. And, hence, the

life I led was, to a great extent, if not altogether, the life of the natural man. Perhaps I lived as well, and I say it in no spirit of vanity or boasting, as the natural man ever lives; but, still, I only lived the natural life, and my soul yearned, unconsciously to myself, for something better and more holy. When I recall to your mind the sojourn of my early days in France, and the intercourse of my later life with Mrs. Morley, you will not be surprised to hear, that sometimes my thoughts turned towards the religion professed as well by her as by the humble friends of my early life, but always in a very vague and undefined way. Mrs. Morley, indeed, had never breathed a word to me on the subject of religion; but, still, the *fact* that she, whom I looked upon as the model of every virtue, was a Catholic, frequently presented itself to my mind in my better moments, and had, no doubt, its influence upon me. Moreover, the impression which had been created on my infant mind by the picture of the Lady and her Child, which I had first seen in my little bedroom in the South of France, had never been entirely effaced; although, of course, it had, through length of time, and the cares and occupations of my later years, become almost obliterated. Still, there were times, when the recollection of those days flashed across my mind, and when I felt my heart drawn to them with something of the old attraction; and, I am fain to believe and to cherish the thought that she had

never lost sight of me; but that I had ever been near and dear to her mother's heart, and that her all-powerful influence was gradually preparing me for the great and crowning mercy which was so soon to fall upon me. At all events, I fondly cherish the belief that I owe it all to her and to her tender love; and I am proud, how proud, she and the saints, whose queen she is, alone know, to have an opportunity of testifying the same this public way, and of calling all who shall read this simple tale to bear me witness, how simply, yet, how earnestly I confess, with what tender love I avow my firm belief, that if I am to-day an humble member of God's blessed Catholic Church, I owe it all to her, at once my mother and my queen, the ocean star which thus far has guided me safely through the shoals and eddying currents of this stormy life; the beacon which I fondly trust will guide me still, until she shall have brought me at the last into a haven of eternal rest.

However, although these feelings, or impressions, or whatever we may wish to call them, were doubtless lurking all this time in the most inmost recesses of my soul, I am quite certain that they took no definite shape, that I never sought to render any account to myself of them, much less to act upon them. Still, it is equally certain they were there, the materials of the fire were collected and only wanted the spark to kindle them into a blaze, and it was not long before the necessary spark was sent from God.

One evening, as I was returning home from the counting-house of Smith, Jones, and Smith, as I passed along a certain street, I saw a number of people entering a building, which I at once concluded to be a chapel. There was no distinctive mark about it, and, as far as externals were concerned, it might have belonged to any denomination, but something seemed to whisper to me that it was a Catholic place of worship, and, without a second thought, and without any higher motive than curiosity, I joined the crowd and entered the building. I had scarcely been shown into a seat before a clergyman issued from a door by the side of the altar, and ascended the pulpit. He was very tall and very thin; and there was a chastened and subdued expression upon his countenance which, I vividly remember, struck me very much. He spoke with a slightly foreign accent, but with great earnestness and zeal; and I listened to him with wrapt attention. By a strange coincidence he took for the subject of his discourse the worship paid by Catholics to the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. His arguments were much more of a moral than a dogmatical nature, and the effect of the discourse upon me was almost magical. So far from endeavouring to combat his arguments, as would indeed have been but natural, I found myself, as it were, even going before and preventing him. I drank in, with burning eagerness, the words which fell from his lips; and,

when he concluded, and I had thrown myself upon my knees before the altar, with my face hidden between my hands; it seemed to me as if a great veil had been suddenly removed, and as if I were face to face again with the Lady and her Child in my little room in France, with all the intervening years swept away in one instant. I felt the same longing again spring up in my soul to know more about them, in order that I might love them better; the same desire to rest myself for evermore beneath their sheltering love. I know that some may say that all this was very unreasonable on my part, as unreasonable, in truth, as it was strange. I have only to answer that I cannot be said to have acted more unreasonably than those numberless souls to whom God's truths have been made known in equally wonderful and, if you will, unreasonable ways. The light flashed across my mind with a clearness and a brightness which I could not have blinked, even if I had felt any desire to do so, which, thank God I did not; whilst my heart was drawn with a power which I had no strength to resist. I frankly admit that it *was* strange, and, if you will, very strange. I do not seek to account for it. I do not seek to find reasons for you, that may help you to reduce it to demonstration, that may help you to bring God's wonderful ways down to the level of your comprehension. I content myself with stating the fact in all simplicity and truth—in all thankfulness and love—

with a gratitude which I feel in the inmost corner of my heart, but which I neither can, nor desire to express, in order to satisfy your wonder. I admit with you that it was very strange, and the only conclusion which I draw is, that, by how much the more strange all this was, so much the more I am called upon to thank, with never-failing love and gratitude, the God who did such great things for my weakness and my unworthy lowliness. But I digress.

I suppose, I need scarcely tell you that after this it was the old story. I went again and again, and my path grew brighter still, and yet more clear before me. I read and studied with all the earnestness of my soul. I placed myself in communication with the priest, whose words had so wonderfully moved me when I had first listened to him, and, in a short time, I knew and understood perfectly well the step that was to be taken. The conviction of my intellect went hand in hand with the prompting love of my heart and will, and I longed for the day when I might rest me under the shadow of the true Ark of the Covenant, when I might bind myself for once and for ever to the Pillar and the Ground of Truth, when I might lay the head over which, young as it was, so many storms had already swept, to rest in trusting confidence upon my mother's breast. I had no difficulty in laying aside the faith, if I may so call it, in which I had been reared. It seemed to melt away of itself before

the brightness of the truth which, point by point, dogma by dogma, was established and laid down, and it gave me no further uneasiness. My intellect recognised the majestic claims to my allegiance which the Catholic Church proposed to me, and my will bent itself at once in humble and in loving submission, whilst my whole soul was inflamed with the one desire of being formally received, as soon as ever it was possible, into the bosom of the Church. I was, however, in the hands of a prudent man, who would allow of no undue precipitation in so grave a matter; and it was not until I was thoroughly instructed, and able to give on every point a reason for the faith that was in me, that he listened to my earnest entreaty, and made me a member of God's Holy Church. As I have already said, I wish to say as little as possible on this matter. I will, therefore, say no more, except, that I believe that no one in this world can be happier than I was on the days on which I made my first confession, and received, for the first time, my Lord and my God into my breast.

Of course it had never entered into my mind to inform Smith, Jones, and Smith, of the change in my religious belief, as I did not conceive that it could make any difference in our relations, which were purely of a business nature. I think it was about a month after I had been received into the Church, and whilst I was in the first flush of my happiness, that I was one day somewhat startled

by receiving a summons to the private room of the firm. There I found Mr. Smith standing with his back to the fire, his face redder, his cravat stiffer, and his hair and shirt-frill more prickly and bayonet-like than I had ever seen them before. He did not invite me to be seated, but kept me standing face-to-face with himself, eyeing me all the while with a stern and overpowering expression, as if he expected me to sink into the earth before him—a feat which, I need scarcely say, I had not the most remote idea of attempting. After pursing up his mouth, knitting his brows, and thrusting up the porcupine quills which adorned each side of his bald head, until his countenance had attained, what I suppose he considered a proper degree of severity, he proceeded to address me in his most pompous and magisterial tone of voice.

“I have sent for you, sir,” commenced Smith, Jones, and Smith, “to learn from your own lips the truth or falsehood of an extraordinary statement which has been made to me, viz., that you, a member of this Christian household, have had the unparalleled audacity to turn your back upon the Gospel light which, I humbly trust,” and here he turned up the whites of his eyes most lugubriously, giving me, at the same time, a better sight of them than I had ever had before, “is always shining in this family, and have embraced the errors and the degrading superstitions of Popery ? I wait for an answer, sir.”

I was so completely taken by surprise that, for a few moments, I was perfectly unable to reply. First of all, I had never known until then that I was a member of Smith, Jones, and Smith's Gospel and shining-light family. I had never eaten at his table, nor been invited to enter the dwelling, which, according to him, seemed to enjoy such a profusion of heavenly light; and it certainly had never entered into my mind that the fact of sitting upon a high stool all day through in his counting-house, totting up long rows of accounts, had conferred upon me the inestimable privilege of becoming a member of his Christian household. Hence, it took me a few seconds before I could fully realize the dignity of my position, or recover the equilibrium of my mind, which had naturally been somewhat disturbed by the unexpected announcement.

Secondly, it was scarcely less strange to me to hear the faith, which to my mind represented the very essence of everything holy and divine, stigmatized as error and degrading superstition. However, after a while I rallied, and, summoning up all my courage, I ventured to reply.

"I am really very sorry, sir," said I, "if I have offended you. I have certainly embraced the Catholic faith," I was going on to say; but, when I had made this astounding admission, Smith, Jones, and Smith, gave such a fearful snort, and drove his fingers so fiercely through the porcupine quills, that I was quite alarmed, and had to pause

again for a short time. "I am really very sorry, sir," I resumed, quite apologetically, "if I have offended you; but I really couldn't help it. I really couldn't do otherwise than as I have; and I thought, sir, that you wouldn't care about it, so long as I did my duty faithfully to you, which I always will to the very best of my power."

"And what reason have *you*, sir," retorted Smith, Jones, and Smith, taking me up quite quickly, and with a withering emphasis on the *you*, "for supposing that I *do* care about it, or that your proceedings are of the slightest consequence to *me*? Your impertinence is quite on a par with your presumption, sir, and they are both worthy of the filthy superstition you have embraced, like a fool as you are."

I had a grievous temptation to seize an office chair, and render myself, without further parley, the subject for an indictment for assault and battery, committed upon the person of Smith, Jones, and Smith, but I swallowed my indignation as well as I could, in the hope of bringing my employer to reason by more gentle means.

"Indeed, sir," I answered meekly, "I know very well that I ought not to have supposed that you would care about anything which concerned so humble an individual as myself. Still, when I saw you so angry"—another slip—"I naturally concluded that you had some little interest in me which had caused you to speak to me on this matter; but I see that I was unguarded in my

language, and I beg your pardon again, sir, and trust that you will allow things to go on between us as usual."

"I beg *your* pardon, sir," he answered, getting redder and redder in the face, "but I am *not* angry. I trust I have too much respect for myself, and too much command over my feelings, to allow any emissary of Popery, much less one of my own clerks, to make me angry. I *did* take an interest in you," he added, in his most lofty way, "but all that is past. I entertain it no longer. No member of this Christian household" (he was at it again, save the mark) "can be indifferent to me. I embrace them all in the bowels of charity; but my Christian principles cry out against idolatry and idolators, and I should expect this house to fall and bury me in its ruins if I allowed a worshipper of stocks and stones, and graven images, to remain for a single day under my roof."

"But, sir," I remonstrated, "I am not an idolator, and I don't worship graven images; and so what you say does not apply to me at all events, and, hence, I hope you will not be severe with me."

Smith, Jones, and Smith, looked at me once more, as if he expected the earth to open and swallow me up. "You don't worship graven images?" he asked, ironically, and looking round the room as if it were full of people. "He doesn't worship graven images," addressing the

imaginary audience; "why, they all worship graven images. They're all idolators. I've heard it a thousand times—ever since I was a child; and I ought to know something about it, I think. No, sir"—turning to me; "I know better. Don't tell me, sir. You're all idolators, every one of you, from the Pope of Rome downwards. Don't tell me."

"But, sir," said I, "may I humbly ask, do you speak from your own knowledge, when you thus fix such dreadful charges upon us. Have you examined our doctrines, read our books, or listened to the preaching of our clergymen that you thus condemn us so dogmatically?"

He raised his hands as if to express, so far as I could judge from the gesture, horror and pious indignation. "Examine your doctrines! read your books! listen to your preachers! God forbid! I wouldn't read a page in any of your books for all the world. If I were dragged into one of your churches by main force, I would stop my ears rather than listen to your abominations. I have my bible, sir," he went on. "I have the Word, sir, and that is enough for me; and I know," he repeated more fiercely than ever, "that you are all idolators, that the Pope of Rome is Antichrist, that you're all on the high road to perdition; and," coming to the point, "I will trouble you to remove yourself from this Christian family at once, and never let me see your face again. I pity you, sir. I grieve for your blindness. I'm

sorry to see you jumping into the pit of perdition with your eyes wide open; but it's no affair of mine, and I'll trouble you to seek employment elsewhere, and at once, sir."

Here was a *dénouement* altogether unexpected.

What was I to do? Smith, Jones, and Smith had worked himself up into such a fury, that I was in momentary dread that he would break a blood-vessel, go off into a fit, or do something else equally disagreeable and uncomfortable. I am convinced that something would certainly have happened if he had not found a safety-valve for his overwrought feelings in muttered exclamations about Antichrist, Popery, idolatry, graven images, and the like, which burst from his lips, as he paced up and down the room with hurried strides. When he was somewhat more calm I returned to my point, for I was by no means prepared to be sent about my business so unceremoniously.

"It certainly appears, sir," said I, very meekly, "that we are not likely to agree upon religious matters. I am very grateful to you for past favours. At the same time, I can truly say, that I have done all in my power to discharge my duty to the best of my ability"—Smith, Jones, and Smith made a gruff motion of assent—"and if you will kindly allow me to retain my present situation, you will find, I trust, that the only effect of my new religion will be to make me more and more faithful, and more assiduous in the discharge of my duties. If you find the contrary, discharge

me at once without mercy, and I will not complain. Do not, sir," I pleaded earnestly, "do not, I pray you, drive me upon the world. I have no parents and no friends, and if you discharge me in this manner, I don't know what will become of me—indeed, indeed, I don't." I think I even clasped my hands in the earnestness of my entreaty, but, he turned his head away from me. "Try me, sir," I went on, "try me only for three months, and *then* pass judgment upon me, if you will—but be merciful to me, now, for I have no one to help me. God knows, I am alone in the world."

I think that my prayers might have moved a very hard heart, for I was very earnest, and spoke from my inmost soul, but they didn't move Smith, Jones, and Smith, or, if they moved his heart, they were not, at all events, sufficient to overcome his prejudice. I felt how unjust he was to condemn me without hearing me—how unreasonable in condemning us as idolators whilst he even boasted of his ignorance of our doctrines, and called God to witness that he wouldn't read one of our books for all the world. I felt almost ashamed of myself for condescending so far as to plead with him as I did, but the whole affair had taken me so much by surprise, I was so friendless, and the loss of my situation struck me at first sight as so very serious, that I submitted, or, if you will, cringed to him more than I should have done had I been better prepared for this interview.

“ You are right, sir,” he answered; “ *we shall not* agree on religious matters without you are prepared to return to the pure form of Christianity which you have so rashly forsaken; without you are prepared to return with due submission to the church of your baptism, and make reparation for the scandal which you have brought upon this Christian household.” The Christian household again!—He saw my hasty motion of denial, and went on:—“ As you are not prepared to do this, you must take the alternative. No, sir,” he continued, getting into a passion again, “ if you were to go down on your bended knees, and swear to be more faithful ten times over than you say you have been, I wouldn’t believe you. I know something about these matters I hope. Why, it was only the last Sabbath that Dr. McNeill proved to demonstration that oaths were not binding on Papists, and don’t I know that you would swear to me in one breath, and then go away and be absolved by the first Jesuit whom you met.” When I objected that I didn’t know a Jesuit he was ready with his old answer: “ Don’t tell me, sir, don’t tell me: why you’re all Jesuits, every one of you. You would be plotting and scheming, I know very well. The peace and harmony of this family would be destroyed, the young men committed to my charge would be corrupted and led astray, and the fruits of my honest industry would melt away under the curse of God, which I should incur for keeping

you under my roof! For these reasons, and most of all, because I am the Christian head of a Christian household, I request of you once more to leave my house, and that at once."

He had called me so many ugly names, at least by insinuation, and had made me the probable instrument of so many crimes, that, for a moment, I was really afraid, and felt inclined to look upon myself as the monster which he represented me to be. Fortunately, however, I speedily recollected how unreasonable he had been all through this interview, and so was preserved from feeling thoroughly ashamed of myself, or in the least degree inclined to give up one iota of my principles. I saw that there was no chance of our coming to an understanding, and, so, was desirous of bringing our interview to as speedy a conclusion as possible.

"I am very sorry to perceive, sir," said I, "that you are so incensed against me, and that you will not listen to reason." He snorted again as I said this, but I didn't heed him. "Since it seems that you are determined to drive me out of my employment, without my having given you any just reason for doing so, of course it only remains for me to go. I trust," I added, quite fearlessly, for, of course, I didn't care for him or his anger now, "that I shall find more mercy at the hands of God than I have found at yours. I trust, too, sir," I continued, "that his justice towards you at the day of reckoning won't be measured by yours to me. If

this day's work is one to which you will be able to look with satisfaction on your deathbed, I can only wish you joy of it and the Christian principles whence it has sprung, and assure you that I would not deprive you of them for ten thousand worlds. And now, sir," I concluded, "if you will have the kindness to give me a testimonial as to my character and abilities, I will relieve you of my presence, and wish you good-day with all the satisfaction in the world."

Humanly speaking, it was very foolish in me to allow myself to be thus carried away before I had obtained my certificate; but the sense of his injustice was so keen in me, and my young blood was so hot, that I was quite unable to restrain myself. Besides, as events proved, this was of very little consequence; and, so, whilst, of course, I regret the passion which I showed, I can scarcely be sorry for having spoken with more plainness to Smith, Jones, and Smith than he was probably by any means accustomed to receive from his family or dependents.

I was tolerably angry, no doubt; but he, worthy man, was in a towering rage by this time, and stamped and tore about the room like a madman. "Give you a testimonial!" he cried furiously. "I'd sooner cut my hand off than do any such thing. The only testimonial that I'll give you will be to the effect that you sneaked into a Christian house like a Jesuit in disguise, as I dare say you are, and tried to bring your stocks and your stones, and

your graven images, along with you, till you were found out and ignominiously driven forth. No, sir; begone, and take yourself off to your monks, and your priests, and your superstitions; and, when any one asks you why you were driven out of this, you can tell them that Mr. Smith, of the firm of Smith, Jones, and Smith, found you out, creeping like a serpent through his peaceful household, and that he put his foot upon you, sir, and crushed you, sir, by the help of the blessed Word, and brought confusion upon all your plots and your schemes for the destruction of his Christian household. There's a testimonial for you, sir, and it's the only one you'll get from me, so make the best of it."

He had become so violent and so abusive, and I was so completely convinced of the uselessness of attempting to stem the torrent of his wrath, that, without waiting to hear any more, I simply turned my back upon him, and, without further ceremony, walked out, leaving Smith, Jones and Smith, whose face I never saw again, to recover his equanimity as best he could.

I now found myself adrift upon the wide world once more. I applied at the office of several merchants in the hope of procuring a situation, but the want of a testimonial from my late employer was fatal to my endeavours. Moreover, I had less heart for such employment than ever. I have mentioned already that up to this time I had been strangely undecided as to my state of life—

strangely uninterested in the one in which I found myself. This indecision was now passing away from me; for, ever since I had begun to think seriously of embracing the Catholic religion, I had felt the greatest possible desire of entering the ecclesiastical state. For some time this idea appeared so presumptuous to me that I ventured to mention it to no one. After I had been received into the true fold, I mentioned it, with much hesitation, and more in the way of a temptation than anything else, to the priest who had received me, and who ever showed himself my true friend. To my astonishment and delight, after duly weighing all that I told him, he informed me that he considered my vocation to be from God, and encouraged me to perseverance. My path grew every day clearer before me; and my heart yearned anxiously for the time when I should be able to commence my ecclesiastical course, if God so willed it. At the time of my interview with Mr. Smith, I had no longer any doubts of my vocation, so far of course as I could judge. The facilities for clerical education were, however, by no means so plentiful in those days as they are now, and it appeared likely that I might have to wait some time before I should be able to enter college. I proposed, therefore, to retain my situation until such an opportunity should arrive, devoting my spare time to rubbing up my Greek and Latin which had become somewhat rusty. My encounter, however, with Mr. Smith, and my subse-

quent failures to obtain a situation brought matters to a crisis; and, my friend having represented the case to the bishop of the district, I was introduced to his lordship, who examined my vocation, confirmed it, and, with the greatest kindness, procured admission for me at once into a college on the continent for which I might start, he informed me, as soon as ever I wished.

Thus, I have related, as briefly as I was able, the circumstances which led me into the Church of God. You will see that there was nothing very remarkable about it; and that God, out of compassion no doubt to my weakness, did not call me to bear any of those great trials which have fallen to the lot of so many converts. He made my path as clear as noonday light before my feet, and filled my soul with a burning desire for the holy state to which I ventured to hope that He had called me, all unworthy as I was. Except that I have determined to write as little about myself as possible, and, especially, in regard to this subject, I could say much to you of the love and boundless gratitude which filled my soul to overflowing, as I now exclaimed with holy David, "My father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord has taken me up;" of the torrent of happiness which inundated me as I thought of all that God had already done for me, and of all that I trusted was yet in store for me.

To be brief, I arranged my little affairs as

quickly as possible. I wrote a full account of all that had taken place to my dear friends, the Morleys, knowing well what joy the news would carry to the heart of her whom I loved as a second mother, and, on the 22nd of October, 18—, I started, with buoyant spirits, for college, to commence my ecclesiastical studies

CHAPTER IV.

* * * * *

I MUST beg you, courteous reader, to suppose a period of some five years to have elapsed since the events recorded in the last chapter took place. I look back to that period of five years with the greatest satisfaction and delight, not unmingled, however, with regret that it so soon passed away, that its holy peace and calm were to be, all too soon, broken in upon by the troubles and the turmoil of more active life. During this period the question of my vocation was decided, and my studies were completed. The long expected and yet dreaded day arrived. I was anointed with the holy oil, the bishop's hand was laid upon my head, and I knew that I was a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech. With more true thankfulness in my heart than I care to try to express in writing, towards God who had so highly favoured me, I turned my back upon my peaceful college home, and set out to begin my active labour in the vineyard of the Lord: conscious, indeed, of my own weakness, painfully conscious how far I was from being all that my vocation supposed me to be, but with a true and earnest will, nevertheless, spite of all my short-


comings, to be if not a profitable at least a faithful servant in my Master's household.

I arrived in London somewhat more than five years after I had left it for college. My old friends, the Morleys, were in town, and I need not say that one of my first visits was to them. I had never seen them since my conversion, but I had frequently heard from them—often from Mrs. Morley, sometimes, but more rarely, from my old friend, Charley. I must not omit to mention one remarkable letter, too, which I received from the colonel. When he heard that I was about to embrace the ecclesiastical state, he wrote to me, and, in language strangely earnest for *him*, besought me to consider well before I took the step, pressing upon me the offers of assistance which he had previously made to me, and going even so far as to say, with many kind and affectionate words, that there was *no* profession whatever beyond my reach, if I thought fit to change my mind, which again and again he begged of me to do, if I had the slightest inclination so to act, or if I felt the slightest doubt as to the propriety of the step which I was about to take. The tone of his letter was certainly such as to astonish me almost as much as it filled me with gratitude for his kindness towards me. However, my mind had never wavered, and, hence, whilst I thanked him with all the fervour of which I was capable for his generous offers, I begged him to pardon me if I declined them as persistent

I had always done, adding, that my mind was quite made up, and that I thought no power on earth would avail to move me from my purpose. Mrs. Morley had written to me after receiving the intelligence of my great change, and the letter she had sent me was so full of Christian piety, so full of devout thankfulness for my conversion, and overflowed with so many expressions of true and tender affection towards me personally, that I had naturally been more drawn to her than ever, and the love, which I had long entertained for her, was increased, if possible, a thousand fold. We had never met since, for the college in which I was studying was very far away from England, and their travels had never led them in the direction in which it was situated; but we had corresponded, as I have already said, regularly. By degrees Mrs. Morley had taken me more and more into her confidence; and, as I drew near to the priesthood, that confidence had assumed a character more and more intimate—I may almost say, sacred. I became the repository of all her troubles—for, alas, troubles had fallen heavily and bitterly upon her gentle and motherly heart—and I knew that she was weeping over my poor friend, Charley, even as Monica wept over Augustine, and I was sorely grieved for both their sakes. Nothing that could affect or touch them could be a matter of indifference to me; and, for several years before my ordination, I had known but too well that she had less and less hope of

Charley's turning his mind, humanly speaking, to the objects which were nearest his mother's heart, viz., virtue and religion; and that a breach between the colonel and his son had been already formed, and was being daily widened through the unbending disposition of the one, and the unreflecting recklessness of the other.

On these accounts I was very anxious about them; and I had not been in London many hours before I made my way to the house where they dwelt. I knocked at the door, and asked to see *her*—my mother, as I had almost come to think her—for I thought it best that my first interview should be with her alone. I sent up my name, and in a moment I heard her step upon the stairs—a step which sent all my blood rushing to my heart with love and affection. I heard her touch upon the handle of the door, and I rose to meet her; she entered with a hurried step and ran towards me, and, before I could prevent it, she had thrown herself upon the ground and kissed my feet. I knew, of course, that she did this out of veneration for my priestly character, but it was infinitely painful to me, nevertheless, and I sought to raise her from her knees. She would not rise, however, until she had received my blessing, which, in truth, I gave to her with streaming eyes, and with all the fullness of my heart and soul. Then she rose, and placed her hands upon my shoulders, and gazed into my face with a sad yet loving look which I understood but too well. A moment



more, and her arms closed about my neck, as she laid her face upon my breast, and broke out into a low wailing cry which wrung my soul with anguish, as I listened to it, knowing, as I did, the source whence it sprung.

I led her to a chair and placed her in it, begging her all the while to try for God's sake and compose herself, but for a long time my efforts were all in vain. The sight of me had loosened the strings of her soul—had recalled, without doubt, the memory of other and more happy days, days when Charley and I had gone down, two, laughing, thoughtless boys, to spend our Christmas holydays at Morley House—before the clouds had arisen which threatened such a storm—and the memory was evidently so painful that she could scarcely overcome it. I knew, instinctively, too, how much, she, a Catholic, with a dear and fondly loved boy of her own, must feel to see me not only a Catholic, but a minister of the altar, whilst her own child was wandering away not only from religion but from virtue and from duty. I strove to comfort her as best I could. I strove to speak to her, as I was now privileged to do, of hope, of trust, of patient resignation to the will of God; and, at last, my words had their effect, and she became more composed and cheerful. Gradually, too, she became able to converse more freely, and to tell me more at length what I already, at least partially, knew.

When we first began to talk together, she had

addressed me by my priestly name; but I quickly begged of her to think of me only as of her child, and to call me by the name by which she had known me in the days when I had promised to take her for my mother; and, henceforward, although in public she always addressed me by my formal title, in private she called me by the more familiar name.

“You will find the colonel much altered,” she said, when at last we began to talk together. “He has aged strangely, lately, and I know that he is unhappy; for, alas, troubles have come upon us, Arthur, heavy, bitter troubles,” she went on, turning away her head that she might hide the tears which were streaming forth anew. I took her hand in mine and tried to comfort her, and she resumed:—“We are both unhappy; and, oh, that I should have it to say—and I have never said it in words before, but I can say it to *you*, Arthur—it is our boy who is breaking our hearts. I know that I deserve my share a hundred times over,” she went on, in a sadly self-accusing tone; “but I ought not to have exposed my husband to such suffering as was morally certain to arise from a union like ours. I ought to have smothered my love for him. I ought to have flown away and hidden myself from his sight rather than link my fate to one who did not think as I thought, who did not pray as I prayed, who did not believe as I believed. Oh, it was a cruel thing, Arthur; and I ought never to have done it. He has been a

tender and a loving husband to me, more tender and loving far than I deserved; and how can I blame him for wishing to bring up his child in his own religion. Oh, if I had but known then what I know now, not all the world should have made me do it—have made me expose my husband to such pain—myself and my child to such fearful risk of our poor soul's salvation." She stopped and wrung her hands in agony; and, yet, what could I say to comfort her—what could I say to ease her troubled mind, feeling, as I did, that there was but too much of sad, sad truth in all she said. "*He* seldom comes here now, Arthur," she went on, "and when he does, the colonel will not see him. He seems to be of no religion. He never goes to church; and, yet, when on my bended knees I beg of him—and I *have* knelt to him, Arthur—I have knelt to my own child, and begged and prayed of him, as he valued the salvation of the mother who bore him, to remember that he was baptized a Catholic and taught his duty before his father interfered between us, he only puts me off and says, that there is time enough, and that he will think about it; and all the while my heart is breaking with the load of sorrow that is pressing on it; God knows, my heart is breaking. Oh why, oh why did I bring him into the world," she wailed and cried, "if he is to loose himself and me? Oh, may God have pity on me, for my heart will surely break."

It was a sad scene—God knows it was a sad

scene. We talked together long and earnestly, and my heart was filled with sorrow for my friend's perversity. He had become more and more estranged from home, so I learnt from his mother; and whilst there had been no absolute quarrel between himself and his father, his thoughtless conduct, for I was firmly convinced that his conduct arose more from thoughtlessness than malice, had widened the breach between them to such an extent as to make it almost irreparable. There may have been, and probably there were, faults on both sides. The colonel may have been too strict in his notions, perhaps, and may have wished to impose more restraint upon his son than it was natural to suppose that he would submit to; but, this was no reason why Charley should have so far forgotten what was due to him, who, whatever might have been his faults, and however haughty and reserved he might have been to others, had always been a tender and affectionate father to him; and I sought to make no excuse for my friend's conduct. I blamed him, and blamed him severely. I determined that if influence of mine could bring it to pass, that if words of mine had any effect on my friend, it should not be long before a reconciliation were effected between these two, both of whom were so dear to me. How little did I imagine how many a weary day would pass ere I could bring this about—how little did I foresee

how much additional pain and suffering were in store for all of us.

After a while, Mrs. Morley went up to inform the colonel of my arrival; for, as she told me, he very rarely left his room now. She thought it better not to take me up without previously giving him warning, for he could ill bear the effect of surprise or sudden excitement. She came down again in a few minutes in order to conduct me to his room. As we passed along up staircases and through rooms which were rich with every luxury that wealth and a refined taste could heap together—with servants in handsome liveries to relieve us even from the trouble of opening a door—few could have imagined how worthless all these things were to the master and the mistress to whom they belonged, and how little comfort they could bring to the heavy hearts which used them without caring for them so long as that infinitely dearer treasure after which they pined was at such a distance from them. I felt her hand tremble upon my arm as we traversed the stately rooms ere we reached that in which the colonel chiefly lived—a large apartment at the back of the house, away from the noise of the street. As we entered, I took in at a glance that it was elegantly and luxuriously furnished; but my attention was immediately directed to the colonel, who rose and advanced hurriedly to meet me. He had always been kind to me in his own

distant, reserved way, but this was the first time he had ever taken me in his arms, or laid his head upon my shoulder. He did not speak to me, although I think he tried and failed. I say, that I think he tried, for I distinctly remember that some inarticulate sounds came from him, sounds such as we hear when a man attempts to utter the words which strong emotion will not let him form. I thought that I knew well what was passing through his mind, although, in truth, I did but know a part of it. However, I can say, that I had never felt such respect, affection, I think, I may almost add, love for him before as I did now, as I bent my face down to his, as it rested upon my shoulder, and drew him timidly, indeed, but affectionately to my heart. His cheek felt very cold as it touched my own, and it seemed to me as if he trembled visibly as it did so. After a few seconds of infinitely painful silence he raised his face and gazed long and intently into mine, with such a sad, a weary, and heart-broken look, as rent my soul to see. I had expected to find him changed, but not changed like this. As his eyes met mine with that sad look, the shock which I had often felt before passed through my frame a hundred times more strongly and more vividly than ever, and, I think, I fairly staggered for the moment with astonishment and excitement. Where had I seen that face before? Why did it thrill my soul in such a wondrous and fearful way; and, now, when it was pale and haggard, a hundred times

more powerfully than ever? What did it mean, or, what solution could I give to this strange problem? It was a mystery which I could not solve, and, when I say that it affected me profoundly, I only express in the most meagre and naked way what I felt. It *more* than affected me, for now it moved my inmost soul, and almost terrified me with a dread for which I could give no reason, with a misgiving and terror which seemed, so far as reason was in question, to be without foundation. I think he must have seen how pale I grew (for I knew instinctively that all the colour had fled from my cheek), for I felt him draw me nearer to him with a gentle and assuring motion, and then he led me to a chair close by his own, and placed himself by my side, still holding my hand in his own. I regained my composure, at least partially, in a few moments more, and then I was able to take a better look at him than I had yet done. It was little more than five years since we had seen each other before, and yet it seemed to me as if some fifteen or twenty years had been added to his age. Although never very robust or florid, he was *then*, nevertheless, a handsome portly gentleman, and now he was, or, at all events, seemed to be, an old man. His hair was white, his cheek was pale and haggard, his step weak and uncertain, and, it was plain to see, at least it was plain to me, that his winter had come upon him long before his time. I spent the rest of that day with him in his room, for he

would not let me go; and, indeed, I needed no persuasion to induce me to remain with him. He was very gentle and very affectionate to me, and it afforded me more real pleasure than I can at all express, to find how much gratification my presence seemed to give him. That habit of his, to which I have already alluded, of allowing his mind to wander away even in the middle of a conversation, had grown greatly upon him, for often, during this evening, whilst I was talking to him, I could see him growing less and less attentive to what I said, till, in the end, it was evident that his mind was far away, and that he was perfectly unconscious that I was speaking to him. That the thoughts which thus carried him away were of no pleasant character, was very evident from the heavy, weary, and heart-broken sigh with which he came to himself at last. That he was conscious, more or less, of this infirmity, if we may so call it, was plain to me, from the gentle and apologetic pressure of his hand on mine as he once more directed his attention to what I was saying. If any one else had acted thus when in conversation with me, it is possible that I might have felt offended and discontinued it. For him I had nothing but pity and most tender sympathy; and so I did my best to keep from him the consciousness that I perceived it, and continued my conversation as if nothing had happened to interrupt it; and, although he never adverted to it in words, I could see easily enough

that he was grateful for my consideration—if, indeed, it deserved such a name. During the evening he returned with all possible delicacy, and, yet, with an evident agitation and anxiety which very much astonished me, to the subject contained in the letter which he had written me before my ordination. I repeated again, and still more earnestly, what I had said to him then. I think he asked me at least half a dozen times that evening whether any possible change of circumstances could have altered my determination; and when I as often answered, that for no position in the world would I desire to exchange the state to which God had called me, or to be otherwise than as I was, a happier smile than I had yet seen upon it would pass across his face, as he drew me to him, praying God, in that low, sad voice which seemed almost as strangely familiar to me as his face, that I might be happy, very, very happy; adding, that God only knew how fervently he prayed that I might be very happy, and that troubles such as his might never come upon me.

During the whole of the time that I remained with him he never mentioned Charley's name, or alluded to him; but his silence was more painfully suggestive, and spoke to me a hundred times more forcibly than the loudest lamentation, or the most bitter complaint which words can frame, could ever have done.

My time was not altogether at my own disposal, for I had been appointed to take charge of a

parish by my superior, although I had not as yet entered upon my duties; but as they would not hear of my leaving that night, at least, I willingly consented to spend it under their roof.

I had only been in my own room, after I had retired for the night, a short time, when I heard a gentle knock at my door. When I opened it to my surprise I found that Mrs. Morley was my visitor. She came to tell me that Charley was below, having called to spend an hour or two with her, as he sometimes did in an evening, and to ask me whether I would see him then, or defer our meeting to some future time. "Not feeling certain as to my wishes," so she said, "she had not told him that I was in the house."

Would I see him? Aye, indeed, I would, and that at once; for, spite of all his folly, I can safely say that he was dear to me as ever—nay, I think that he was dearer. At all events, I felt more intimate concern for him than ever; for now not only did I love him, love him as the true and constant friend of bright and happy days, but he was the object of a firm and earnest determination which had fixed itself in the depths of my soul, to bring him back, if possible, to a sense of duty and religion—to make him all that his own good qualities fitted him to be, and my trusting love desired to see him. When I say that I was determined to bring him back, if possible, to a sense of duty, do not suppose, dear reader, that I insinuate that my friend had been guilty

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of any gross dereliction of duty, or that he had wandered hopelessly away from the path of virtue. No, even if it had been so, surely mine is not the pen to write it down, mine is not the tongue to speak a harsh, unkindly word of him, or magnify his faults beyond their just proportions. Nay more, if there were any one whose bounden duty, whose earnest love might prompt him to soften down all this—to look with a hopeful eye to what might promise better things—surely, very surely, I was that man; and, as I have already said, although my friend had unfortunately allowed himself to be led away by thoughtless, or, still worse, designing companions—although, instead of humouring the peculiarities of his father's character, and more especially that sensitive pride which made him so painfully alive to, and exaggerate the smallest opposition, he had opposed and thwarted him until such a breach had sprung up between them—although I could not blink the fact that my friend had allowed himself to be carried beyond due limits by those seductive pleasures which the world spreads out so alluringly before its victims, and although I regretted, and this the most profoundly of all, that, for the time at least, he had forsaken religious principle, still I believed in my heart of hearts that he was the frank, generous, honourable, warm-hearted Charley Morley whom I had known so well in former days; and I hoped as firmly as I believed, that, with God's help, he would recover himself in the

end before it was too late, and that all would yet be well. I had several reasons for entertaining this, as I trusted, well-founded hope. First, I relied much upon his mother's love, and his mother's prayers. I knew how, morning, noon, and night, her prayers were ever rising to the throne of God for her child; and I could not but think that, sooner or later, these prayers would surely be heard. Secondly, I relied much on the naturally good dispositions and the upright, honourable nature of my friend; and, lastly, having learnt from his mother that there existed what she believed to be a true and sincere attachment between her son and a young lady whom I had met at Morley House when we were children, and whom you may, perhaps, remember that I mentioned at the time, I felt convinced that this attachment would do much to win him back to duty and to virtue. I had the more hope on this latter ground, because Mrs. Morley informed me that Mary Crosby was a sincere, earnest, and practical Catholic.

Hence, dark as things looked at first sight, I was inclined to take the more hopeful view of matters, even before the door of my room was thrown open, and, in the old impetuous way, my friend threw himself into my arms. It needed no laboured words to tell me how delighted beyond measure he was to see me once again; and I, as I gazed into his face, the frank, honest face, and the large, bright, blue eyes of old,

forgot everything except that the dearest friend I had ever possessed was holding my hand, and pouring hurried words of welcome and affection into my ear. After all, he was but little changed; his eye was bright as ever, his cheek almost as fresh and fair, whilst his hair, which had always been very beautiful, was still more so now. The same frank, winning smile still played about his mouth; the same generous, honest nature spoke out in every feature of his countenance, and, as I stood face to face with him, my heart utterly refused to believe that he was beyond the hope of reclamation. Nay, had not his own mother told the tale, and had I not seen how his father was silently suffering, I should have utterly refused to believe that the Charley Morley by my side was not, in every sense of the word, the Charley of former days.

After a while his mother kissed us both, her son upon his cheek and me upon the forehead, and, then, retiring, left us alone. I thought Charley would never have done coming over to me and shaking my hand, walking round me, and cutting all kinds of curious capers, expressive, I suppose, of unbounded delight and satisfaction; but, at last, he settled down somewhat, and we placed ourselves on each side of the fire, in order to have a long uninterrupted chat.

"Atty, old fellow," began Charley, "I'm so glad to see you that I really don't know how to express myself. But, I beg your pardon," he

went on, quickly, "I suppose it isn't right for me to address you so familiarly now; but, you see, I haven't got used to you yet in your new character, and I'll try and be more respectful for the future. As yet, I can only think of you as of the dearest friend I have in the world, Atty—oh, there again—not, indeed, as if I expected that you must cease to be my friend because you have assumed a new character, but, I am thinking of you, you see, as of the little fellow whom I took under my protection when he made his first appearance at the doctor's. I say," he rattled away, "do you remember the day we thrashed the Game Cock? I am thinking of you as of the honest, warm, true-hearted friend who stood to me in London, and bore with all my folly so generously and so forgivingly, and it isn't easy to get all this out of my head at once, in order to make room for you in your new character. I know it isn't right for me to be calling you 'Atty' now, and I'll try and get my tongue round the 'Rev.' as soon as ever I can; but, for all that, whatever I may *call* you, I know what I shall always *think* you," and up he jumped again and shook my hand, as if he had not done so fifty times already.

"Charley," I answered, as well as the emotion which his affection towards me naturally awakened would allow me. "Charley, let there be no ceremony between you and me, at all events. I think we know one another too well to render that either

necessary or desirable. Think of me, speak of me as you deem best, and as comes most natural to you; only take care ever to remember that the best affections of my heart are yours—that I love you as dearly as ever I did in days gone by—that whatever office of love or duty man can pay to man will be rendered to you by me, with all my heart and soul. Never forget that, Charley, never forget that.”

In a little time I contrived, with as much delicacy and tact as I was master of, to turn the conversation to the relations in which he stood towards his parents, and more especially to his father. I discovered but too soon that I had touched a tender place, and that he winced beneath the remarks which I ventured to make to him. It pained me more than I can say to hear the tone of irritation and bitterness with which he spoke of his father, and the disagreement between them. A cloud passed over his face at once, a frown settled on his brow, and he withdrew the hand which, up to this, had rested in my own. “He is so unreasonable,” he exclaimed, “he treats me like a child; he thinks that I am to submit to all his whims and caprices as much as I did when a boy; he seems to think that I am never to have my own way—that I am never to have my liberty like other men of my age and position, and I won’t submit to it. We never see one another now, and I think it better for both parties that it is so; and he has no one but himself to blame for it.”

He was going on, but I stopped him hastily, for, in truth, it annoyed me more than I can tell to hear him speak in this way.

"Charley," said I, warmly, "you forget yourself sadly, when you thus speak in my presence of one whom I, at least, both love and respect; you forget yourself more sadly still when you speak in such a manner of him who has so many claims to your respect—one who has ever been so fond a parent to you, and who has at this moment more need of your most tender love and consideration than, I am afraid, you are at all likely to acknowledge. I pray God, Charley," I went on more warmly still, "that the moment may never come when, in the bitterness of your soul, you may have to weep that you brought your father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; and, when all the world, if it were at your disposal, will not enable you to undo the work which I fear you are but too surely doing now."

"Arthur," he cried out, passionately, springing to his feet, whilst his eyes seemed to flash fire, "Arthur, you have no right to speak to me so—you have no right to bring such charges against me; I won't allow any man, not even you, to speak to me in such terms, so don't attempt it, for I tell you that I will not bear it."

I went over to him where he stood, and strove to take his hands in mine. At first he resisted; and snatched them hastily away; but I persevered in my endeavour, and at length he allowed me to

hold them in my own. "Charley," I said, speaking to him with all the tenderness which I felt for him in my soul, "Charley, my dear, dear friend, I *have* a right, nay more, I have a bounden duty and an obligation to speak to you, even as freely as I have done. If I loved you one degree the less, if I had one iota less interest in your welfare, I should scarcely have undertaken to discharge a duty which is obviously as disagreeable to you as it is infinitely painful to me; but, it is because I *do* love you so much that I speak to you with all the freedom which my interest in you and my love for you prompt me to employ. I make no charge against you, Charley," I went on, "except, perhaps, the charge of thoughtlessness; but, I have come home, and I have found that your mother's heart is breaking, I can see that your father is sinking into his grave, and I should be a hypocrite if I pretended to hide from you my conviction that your conduct, your thoughtless conduct, if you will, is at the root of all this; and, I grieve for you, my friend, from my inmost heart, indeed, indeed I grieve for you." I paused and turned my head away, for I felt the tears running down my face, and it was a moment or two ere I could go on. "Charley," I resumed, "do, for God's sake, take this to heart ere it be too late. Tell me," I said, as well as I could through my tears, as I endeavoured to draw him nearer to me, "tell me, Charley, and I never knew you tell an untruth yet, do you think the path on which you have

entered is one on which it behoves a Christian youth, nay, more, a Christian son to walk; or is it not, and do you not know it well, the path that leads too surely to perdition? Tell me, Charley," I pleaded more earnestly, "was there ever in the world a better or a dearer mother than yours, was there ever father who cherished son more tenderly than he has cherished you? Nay, turn not away," I went on, as he strove once more, but, this time less hastily, to snatch his hands from me. "You *shall* hear the truth for once at least, and you know it, in your inmost heart you know it, and your conscience is ringing it into your ears this moment, that it was his very love for you, his very care and solicitude for your welfare that made him act in the manner which you have so bitterly, and so unreasonably, yes, unreasonably, I repeat, resented. And do you believe, can you say it to me on your honour as a man, that you believe that the whole of these gay friends of yours are worth one single hair which falls from your mother's head; that the hours and days which you spend in their company, that the false pleasures which you share with them, will ever help you to atone for the evil which you are doing, for the sorrow which you are heaping, so heedlessly but so heavily, God forgive you for it, on the heads of those who ought to be nearer and dearer to you than all the world besides, and who are sinking in sorrow to their graves, pining away for very want of that love which should be all

theirs, and which is lavished upon objects as unworthy of it as they are of you? Pardon me, Charley," I went on, "pardon me, my friend, my best, my only friend, if I pain you;—but, indeed, my heart is full of sorrow for those whom I love so well;—God only knows how bitterly I grieve for them, how bitterly I grieve for you, how fearfully I tremble at what is before us all."

I could say no more, for my heart grew too full for speech; and, so, I only laid my face upon his shoulder, and sought to hide my tears as best I could, whilst he, poor fellow, was all meekness, all sorrow and contrition now. Like myself he could hardly speak, but he muttered something to the effect that he was very thoughtless and very foolish, but that he was not so bad as I made him. He begged my pardon very humbly for having been so hasty with me, and these were the only words which I caught distinctly.

"Oh, Charley," I answered quickly, "there is no need to ask *my* pardon, for you have not offended me. I think that there is scarcely anything which you could say or do which would make me angry with you for my sake alone. All I ask of you is to think of what I have said, and to act as your own unbiassed judgment dictates to you. As you love me, Charley, promise me this."

"God bless you, Atty," he sobbed, rather than said, "and reward you for all that you have done for us—for all your love for *them*. Pray to God,

Atty, that I may become a better man, and help me how to do it."

Poor Charley. He wrung my hand once more, and when I looked up he had gone. I think he was sincere, and that he meant what he had promised me; but when I enquired for him in the morning he had already left the house, and it was sometime ere I saw him again.

Meanwhile, the clouds grew darker still, and the storm came lowering nearer, nearer yet. I saw it in the distance, and I trembled at the prospect; and, yet, I could do nothing but raise my voice to God and beg of Him to avert from those I loved so dearly the fearful troubles that were looming on them, and which, so far as human eye could see, grew denser and more hopeless every day.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER year or so, and spite of all that I could do, matters were worse than ever. My time was greatly taken up by the duties which now necessarily devolved upon me; but, fortunately, the Morleys were living within a few miles of me, and, as often as I could, I ran down to see them, and gave them the pleasure which I knew that my presence always afforded them. I seldom saw Charley, as he was more than ever bound up in his gay companions; and the remonstrances which I had addressed to him when I first met him after my return, and which I had more than once repeated, had been, I grieve to say, without effect. He was as affectionate to me as ever, he listened to me patiently, he promised to do as I begged him, but, he went his way, and either forgot his promises or disregarded them. I have every reason to believe that those evil friends of his imposed upon his good nature, and, for their own ends, did their best to widen the breach between himself and his father, exaggerating every little matter of discord far beyond its due proportions. It required no prophet to foretell what the end of all this must be; and, seeing how utterly useless all my efforts to bring him to

better things were, I could hardly feel sorry that we now saw so little of one another, for the sight of him only filled me with sad and painful thoughts.

Meanwhile, the colonel failed very fast. I think that but for the love and never-failing watchfulness of his wife, he must have sunk ere this. As it was, each time that I saw him, I found him weaker, more feeble and broken than at my last visit, and I knew that the end was not very far distant. Since my return, the colonel had been obliged to pay his son's debts—debts, I need scarcely say, incurred in dissipation and extravagance. I knew well their amount, for he had asked me to draw the cheque; and, although he had paid the money without a word, rather than have his name brought before the world in such a disgraceful matter, I could tell from the nervous twitching of his mouth, and the heavy frown upon his brow, from the fact that after I had posted the letter containing the necessary instructions to his lawyer in London, he sat for hours holding my hand in his, but never speaking a single word, how much he suffered, and how heavy was the burthen which he bore. He would not allow me to mention his son's name, as I sometimes sought to do; he never spoke of him himself; and, whilst his heart was breaking from that son's coldness and neglect, his stern, proud nature choose to suffer on in silence, and would not allow itself even the luxury of one complain-

ing word. It was a painful sight to me to see him thus sinking into his grave, and to know that the voice which, beyond all others, should and could have carried comfort to his heart was silent; that the step which should have been for ever waiting on his wants was never there; that the form which should never have been absent from his side was never to be seen in the chamber where he wasted daily more and more. It was almost more painful still for me to know and feel how little reason, after all, there was that these things should be so, when a little more indulgence, a little sacrifice of pride and sensitiveness on the one hand, and a little more consideration and self-denial on the other, might have smoothed away so much of what had grown almost intolerable. And, yet, for want of this, here were two beings, who in their hearts loved one another truly, and who ought, under every point of view, to have been dearer to each other than all the world, fuming and fretting, and throwing away years which would never return, however much they might long for them; sacrificing to such an unreasonable idol on the one side and the other, that pure worship of the faithful love of faithful hearts which might have made their lives so happy, the want of which was killing one and driving the other into acts of excess, of disobedience, and of stubborn resistance, whose very thought should have covered his face with burning blushes, and brought him, an humble

penitent, to his father's feet. It is a wondrous mystery, truly, how these things come to pass, and how loving, sensible, and reasonable men can be so mad and foolish—and, would to God, that we could see our madness oftener than we do before it is too late.

And so he faded away in the silence and the loneliness of the luxurious room, which, with all its gorgeous appliances for comfort and for rest, could never bring a moment's ease, a moment's relief to his poor suffering heart—a heart suffering, indeed, on more accounts than I then knew—whilst I can scarcely tell whether my deep and earnest sympathy for him, or my indignation at his son's unreflecting conduct, were the prevailing feeling of my soul. It was not much that I was able to do; but no one can ever know how thankful I am for it, or how pleasant it is for me to think, that whatever I could do I did with all my heart and soul, even as I would have done to my own father, to smooth his passage to the grave. No one can ever tell how much of deepest comfort and of consolation there is to me in the knowledge which I have, that he perceived my affection and appreciated it, that he sought my love, and sought it not in vain.

I knew that he was sinking, but I did not expect to be summoned to his dying bed so soon as I was; still less did I expect what awaited me there. Early one morning there came a message to me, begging me to hasten down as quickly as

ever I could, adding, that he was very ill and asked for me continually. I started with as little delay as possible, pondering as I went, as well as my sorrow would allow me, how Charley and he were to be brought together; how that reconciliation, which *must* be wrought now, might be best effected. I could scarcely see my way through it, more especially as I was ignorant of the precise state in which I might find him; but, spite of the difficulties which presented themselves, over all and above all rose perpetually the thought that this reconciliation must be brought about, no matter how; that these two must be reconciled, and peace be made before the shadow of death threw its impenetrable veil between them, and that I must be the instrument to effect it. And I don't know that I have ever prayed to God more fervently than I did, as I hurried on that solemn journey, begging Him to show me how to bring that to pass after which my heart so yearned, and in presence of which even the sorrow that I felt at his approaching death, for I *knew* that he would die, seemed to fade away and hold but the second place; begging Him not only to enlighten me, but to help me how to bring all this to a happy issue.

When I arrived Mrs. Morley met me at the door, and, before she had spoken a word, I knew very well from her sad, sorrow-stricken face that the case was hopeless. She threw herself into my arms without a word, and for some moments gave

full vent to her grief. She soon recovered herself, however, and prepared to lead me up to his room. "You will find him very ill, Arthur," she said to me, in her low, sad voice; "and I fear that he is not long for this world. He has had some kind of a fit which has weakened him dreadfully; and, although perfectly sensible, the doctors think that he will gradually sink under the attack. They will not, or they cannot, tell me when I may expect the end; but they tell me to be prepared for the worst. In any case I should have sent for you, Arthur," she continued, in a tone so pitiful that she pained me more than I can say; "for, God help me, I have no one else to comfort me; and he asks for you continually. It appears to me as if there was some heavy weight upon his mind which he wishes to disburthen himself of to you, for I never enter his room but he meets me with the same agonizing look, the same fearfully-anxious enquiry to know whether you have arrived, and why we do not hasten you ere it be too late. Whatever this may be, for God's sake, Arthur, do your best to ease him, and bring such comfort as you may to his weary heart." I pressed her hand in silence, for I could not trust myself to speak. "But, Arthur, Arthur," she cried suddenly, her mother's heart forcing itself out above all, "oh! where, oh! where is he who ought to be my prop and stay at this dreadful time? Oh, it is a cruel thing—a cruel, cruel thing to leave me thus alone!" and she sobbed and wept as if her

heart were broken, which in very truth it almost was.

"Nay, mother," I said—for I always called her "mother" now, in moments such as this. "Nay, mother, you are *not* alone—you will never be alone so long as God spares me to stand by your side, and comfort you with such earnest, never-failing love as I can pay you. He alone knows how dear you are to me, and He knows how faithfully I will do my duty to you. Take heart, then, for all our sakes take heart, and never say or think you are alone. Oh, mother, never say that; and let us trust in God that all will yet be well. Have you sent for Charley?" I enquired anxiously, after a moment's pause; "for we must have him here at once—we must make peace between these two, and that without delay?"

"Yes," she answered; "I have despatched messengers to every place where I think him likely to be. Heaven grant that he may come, and that in time. My heart is almost broken as it is," she cried again; "and it would surely kill me outright to know that my husband died without having forgiven his child—without the kiss of peace and reconciliation having passed between these treasures of my love. Oh, Arthur," she wailed rather than spoke, "my cross is heavy truly, almost heavier than I can bear, but not heavier than I deserve. Pray to God for me, that I may have strength to bear it—morning, noon, and night, oh, pray to God for me, for I am a very wretched woman,

and I surely stand in need of help and comfort from above."

"Mother," I said once more, "take heart, and trust in God that all will yet be well; and now take me in, where my presence is so much desired; and do you, in your turn, pray that I may bring comfort, even peace, if God so wills it, to him who stands so much in need of them. Pray that this may be."

She pressed my hand, and, without another word, softly opened the door, and we entered his room. He was in his bed, his face turned towards the door; and I shall never to my dying day forget the longing, weary, anxious look that met my own, or the expression of relief and joy that passed across his pale and haggard face when he saw that it was I, that I had come at last.

I had experience enough of sick beds by this time to see at a glance that he was very ill—to see that he had lain him down upon his bed for the last time—to see that the hand which, sooner or later, must fall upon us all, and from which none of us can escape, had already placed its relentless grasp on him, and that the shadow of death was already upon him. As I stooped down to ask him how he did, his eyes met mine with that strangely longing look, and he tried to raise his face that I might kiss him. As I kissed him on the cheek, I heard him say, "Oh, thank God that you have come—thank God that you have come. Don't leave me, Arthur, until all is over,

for it will not be very long, and I am weary for my rest."

I promised him, as well as I could, that I would not leave him; and as I saw him again, through my blinding tears, trying to raise his face from his pillow, I stooped once more and placed my lips to his, and, as I did so, I heard him whisper still again, "may God bless you, Arthur; I do most humbly thank my God for this. I could not die till I had seen you—and, I thank my God for this."

It did seem strange to me that he was so anxious for my presence, but I little heeded that. I saw that my arrival had brought great comfort to him, and that was enough, more than enough for me then; and, afterwards, I knew and understood it better.

I sat down by his bedside, holding his poor cold hand in mine, and in about half an hour's time he made a sign that he wished them all to leave the room, except myself and his wife. When they had gone, he called her to his side and spoke to her in words of deep and tender love. He thanked her, in my presence, for all her love and never-failing care for him, and said that man had never been so blessed in a faithful partner of his life, as he had been in her, and that he prayed heaven to reward her even as she deserved. She knelt down by his side and kissed his hand, and strove, but all in vain, to speak to him. After a little while he motioned her to rise and give him his strength-

ening draught; smiling, as she did so, with ineffable tenderness upon her, and adding that he stood in need of it now more than she could tell. When he had taken it, he said softly, "Mary, leave us a little while, if you please, for I have much to say to Arthur which I must say to him alone—at which not even you, dearest, may be present; but he will tell it to you when I am gone; and, Mary, Mary," he added with a sudden energy for which I was totally unprepared, "oh, think of me as mildly and as leniently as you can; for, God knows, I have been a weak and erring man, and stand in need of deepest mercy and consideration. I have been a weak and erring man."

I grew more and more astonished as I listened to his words; and I trembled in every limb with a strange foreboding that something infinitely painful was to come. I look back to it at this lapse of time, and I thank God, in my inmost soul, that I can remember that even at the moment when he spoke, the only feeling in my heart was the determination, a thousand times stronger than ever, to do my best to bring comfort to his poor soul—to smooth his passage to the grave, and make peace amongst those who seemed every moment to become dearer to me. She, too, appeared to look at him with a scared and anxious gaze; but, as she bent over him, I heard her whisper that he could never stand in need of mercy or consideration from her—that she could never look on or think of him, but with unfading love, esteem, and duty—

and, then, she went away, and closed the door, and left me in the room with him alone.

It was no wonder if my heart beat fast; no wonder if a feeling as of fear and dread crept over me till I trembled more than ever. I sat listening to his heavy breathing, but I could not say a word. All at once, he raised my hand to his lips and kissed it with a strange, and, to me, unaccountable earnestness. As he did so, in my surprise, I looked enquiringly into his face, and again I saw the longing, anxious, and heart-rending gaze which he bent upon me; and, in truth, I could scarcely tell either what to do or say.

"Oh, Colonel Morley," I said, pleadingly, "oh, what is it; or what can I do for you! Only tell me what it is, and I will try to do it, no matter what it cost me. You have been a kind, a constant, and a generous friend to me; and there is no sacrifice which I can make, no labour which I can undergo to give you peace and comfort which I will not cheerfully submit to. Only let me know what I can do for you, my dear, dear friend."

He did not answer me, but turned his face away, and began to sob and cry.

"Oh, Colonel Morley," I pleaded again, "oh, do tell me what it is—oh, do let me know what is pressing on your mind; do let me know what I can do for you, and, Heaven knows, how cheerfully I will do it; but this agony is unbearable, is worse than all."

He seemed to make a great effort, and at last he spoke—"Arthur," he whispered in low and broken sentences, "I have that to say to you which must be said ere I can die in peace; and, yet, God help me, how, oh, how shall I say it! When you have heard it, perchance you will curse me and my deeds, and if *your* curse should fall upon me," he added fearfully, "it will surely sink me in the depths of hell."

He was going on, but I quickly stopped him. I felt the cold sweat teeming down my face, and I sprang to my feet in horror. "Oh, Colonel Morley," I cried, "oh Colonel Morley, do not, as you hope for mercy, speak so terribly. You fill me with terror and dismay. Oh, tell me, what is on your mind," I went on, taking his hand once more in mine, and pressing it to my heart. "Only tell me what it is; and, although I cannot conceive how you have injured me, still, if you have injured me as man never injured fellow-man before, hear me, how I promise you, that you have my fullest pardon and forgiveness before I have even heard your tale. Hear me," I cried, "how I call my Maker to witness, that you have my fullest pardon, even as I hope to obtain pardon for my own transgressions."

I raised my hand to heaven as I spoke, and, as I did so, he turned his face and looked at me again, more anxiously than ever. "Arthur," he said, in his broken voice, "say that again—oh, let me hear those blessed words again."

I repeated the same words even more solemnly than before, adding, "That I was a sinful man myself; and, as I hoped for pardon from my God, even so did I pardon and forgive him if he had done me any wrong."

He pressed the hand which held his own with a strange force for a dying man. The tears were streaming down his face, and he seemed to raise himself half out of the bed, in his earnestness, as he asked me if I promised him this without any reservation, if there were no injury so great that I excluded it from my mind. When I assured him that God knew that I made no reservation—that I excluded no possible injury whatever—he asked me to raise him that he might rest upon my heart. I took him in my arms and laid him on my breast, albeit, I trembled so that I could scarcely hold him. He placed his head upon my shoulder, and, in broken words that seemed to come in gasps from out his very soul, he whispered his sad secret in my wondering ear. It was this:—

He was my father's only brother! I held my uncle in my arms.

I took it in all at once, and, as the memory of my darling's wrongs came rushing like a whirlwind through my brain, I confess, that for a moment, God forgive me, my heart was hardened against him, and I felt a powerful impulse to let him fall from out my arms, to turn my back upon him and leave him to himself. A moment more, and heaven helped me to better things. I closed my arms

about him, and drew him nearer to my heart, and, as I did so, bent down, for his head had fallen on my breast, and whispered in his ear:—"Uncle, I thank God for this—I do thank God for this. Oh, be at peace at last."

As my words fell upon his ear, a long loud cry which, in his weak state, frightened me more than all the rest, burst from his lips. I strove to lay him on his bed that I might procure assistance, but he clung to me and would not let me go, covering my face with kisses as he held it to his own. He was very much exhausted, and, presently, he motioned to me, of his own accord, to lay him down, and I had scarcely done so, when he fell off into a heavy slumber, still holding me, however, firmly by the hand. I sat and watched him as he slept, and all was plain and evident to me now. The only thing that filled me with astonishment was, that I had not sooner guessed the truth—that I could so often have seen his face and listened to his voice, without perceiving that it was my darling's face, my darling's voice reflected forth in him, which had so often thrilled me with that strange and unaccountable sensation. When I say that I was stunned, at least for the moment, I say no more than the truth. Although, as I have already said, I took it all in in its entirety in a moment; when I began to look at it in detail, it seemed to me a strange and jumbled heap of confusion which as yet I could not fathom or put in order—the only thing that was plain to me

being that he was my father's brother, that he had my father's face and my father's voice—and that, for these reasons, he must be very dear to me, and challenge all my love and duty. God, too, was very good to me in not allowing my mind to wander, as it easily might have done, to the memory of *his* wrongs; as, in that case, spite of myself, the dying man might have perceived some trace of it in word or look—whilst, now, I had no thought or feeling save those of tender love, of deep compassion, of full entire forgiveness towards him who slept, so pale and still, before me.

After a short sleep he awoke again with a sudden start, and with the same anxious, longing look upon his face. It passed away, however, in an instant, when he found me by his side, and he tried to draw me nearer to him. I saw that he was desirous of speaking to me again, and I bent down to him that he might be put to as little exertion as possible, for I perceived that he was very weak. His voice was very soft and low, but inexpressibly tender in its tones as he addressed me, holding me tightly by my hand as if he were afraid that I might leave him. "Arthur," he said, "you have been very good to me, and I pray that God may reward you for it as you deserve. You have brought more comfort to my heart than I have known for many a weary day. I have wronged you, my child," he went on, "more than you can ever know;" but, as he spoke, I put my hand upon his lips and tried to silence

him. "I knew you, Arthur," he continued, "the first time that I ever saw you. I knew at once that you were my brother's child, and my heart yearned towards you and towards him. I longed to tell you who I was, and yet, from very shame I could not do it; for, alas, I had grievously wronged you both. Time after time I determined to do it, and as often, through shame, I failed in my resolution, and, then, *he* died and was beyond my reach. My good purposes were all in vain so far as he was concerned, even as I am beyond his pardon and forgiveness."

"Nay, uncle, say not so," I answered quickly, as his voice faltered and broke down; "think not that you are beyond his forgiveness, for when my darling told his tale to me, he made me put my hands in his and promise to forgive you even as fully and entirely as he declared that he did."

"Arthur, did he say *that*?" he asked, with strong emotion, and with quivering lips.

"Yes, uncle, and much more. My darling had no words, no feelings, and no thoughts but those of peace and full forgiveness for you and all the world. He died in peace with all."

"Thank God," he whispered humbly; "oh, thank God for this, for it is more than I deserve."

Again he turned his face away from me and wept in silence, wept, I think, from joy and very thankfulness of heart.

"I wronged him, Arthur," he went on, "more than I can tell; but I have made such reparation

as was in my power." I did not understand the meaning of his words then, or I would have protested against what he had done. I only learnt it later on, and when it was impossible to alter it. "I did not do him positive injustice," he resumed, his voice growing so weak that I became very anxious to conclude this interview; "but when I saw our father's mind embittered against him, instead of soothing him, and doing my best to smooth away their misunderstandings, I did but foment them and increase them, as I knew that the more they quarrelled the greater gainer I was likely to be; and when he was driven like a dog from the house, *his own house*, God forgive me for it, I was glad. I have only one comfort, Arthur," he went on, in a sadly self-accusing tone, "and it is the thought that I exercised no influence over my father when he made his will. That was his own free and unbiassed act, and I had no part or share in it. I know that I had no right to all his wealth. I know that if I had been an honourable man I should have shared it with my brother, without regard to the will; but it was a temptation, a fearful temptation, and it was too strong for me; and I fell beneath its force. I *could* not give up my wealth, more especially after my boy was born. I always intended to do my duty to you, Arthur," he went on, more piteously than ever; "oh, would to God that I had done it sooner than I have." I pressed his hand, and, bending down, once more I kissed him on the brow, and whispered

words of peace and love in his ear. A smile that did my heart good to see passed across his wasted face—only it flitted away from it all too soon as he resumed—"My boy was so dear to me, you know, Arthur," he continued; "and I was so proud of him. He was the idol of my heart, and the centre where all my hopes converged; and, yet, it has pleased God in his justice to punish me even through him—to smite me with the scourge which I myself have made—to make me suffer as none but such as I can ever suffer. I have learnt to love you dearly, Arthur. I have learnt to lean upon your love more than I can tell. You have been much to me that my own boy might have been; but you, Arthur, even you are not my boy. Oh, would to God that I had died ere it had come to this. My boy! my boy!" All his father's heart broke out in that loud wailing cry which pierced my very soul with sorrow and compassion for him. I saw that I must put an end to this at once, or the consequences might be fatal.

"Uncle," I said, bending down to him. "Uncle, tell me, do you love me dearly?"

He did not answer me in words, but drew me to him, and kissed me on the cheek, with a significance plainer than a thousand words.

"Uncle," I went on, "you have said enough, and, for all our sakes, there must be an end of this. I have heard your tale, and you have asked my pardon; and God knows how fully and how completely it is yours. I have something, too, to

ask of you; and, if you love me, as you say you do, and as I know you do, you will not, oh, you will not, refuse it to me. It is the first favour I have ever asked of you. Perhaps it may be the last. I ask it of you for my darling's sake. Nay, more, I ask it for the sake of Him who is above us all. I ask it even on my bended knees," and, as I spoke, instinctively I fell upon my knees by the side of his bed, and pleaded with all my soul as the tears ran streaming down my face, "Oh, uncle, uncle, promise to grant me what I ask."

He looked at me long and anxiously. I think he half guessed the object of my prayer; but he motioned me to rise. I did not heed him, but laid my face against his own, and pleaded still more earnestly than ever. At last he spoke to me, though I could scarcely catch his words, "Arthur," was all he said, "surely, there is nothing in the world I can refuse to *you*."

"Then, uncle," I answered him, "all I ask is pardon and forgiveness for your boy. Oh, let me bring him to your feet! Oh, let me make peace between you two! I ask no more than this; but, this I ask, and, surely, uncle, I do not ask in vain."

There was a little pause, and then I felt his arms close tightly round my neck, I felt his face press closer to my own, and, oh, thank God, I heard him wailing in my ear, "My boy! my boy! Oh, would that I could see my boy before it be too late—my boy! my boy! my heart is breaking for my boy."

I laid him back upon his bed, and prayed of him once more to be at peace and try and seek some rest. In a few minutes he fell off again into his heavy slumber, and I was glad to have some little time to collect my thoughts and think of all that he had said, and all that now devolved on me a thousand times more imperatively than ever in consequence. I do not mean by this to allude to the fact that I knew that I was now the nominal head, at least, of the family; for I can truly say that this did not cost me a second thought. The reflections that occupied my mind were of a very different nature. I only thought how I might best smooth his passage to the grave, and bring most peace and comfort to his heart; how I might break this news to her, *his* wife, and now in truth almost *my* mother; and how, above all and before all, I might find his son and lead him, ere it was too late, in love and humble sorrow, to his father's feet. And, thus, I sat and watched him as he slept, revolving all these matters in my mind, until I was aroused by the gentle opening of the door, and I saw that she was there. I stole out with noiseless steps and closed the door behind me. When we were in the passage I stopped and took her hands in mine, "Mother," I said, "take heart once more, I have good news for you. There is nothing but peace and full forgiveness in his father's heart towards him who is so dear to you and me. He must be found at once," I added, "and brought to his father's side. Depend upon

it," I went on, "that all will yet be well. And, mother," I added, still more tenderly, "I have more news yet for you—news which I trust you will be glad to hear. Ask me no questions now, for I will tell you all a little later on." And, as she gazed at me with wondering eyes, I bent down and whispered in her ear, "Mother, my father's only brother lies inside. You are now in very deed the nearest, as you have long been the dearest friends I have upon this earth."

She threw her arms about my neck and cried aloud. "Oh, Arthur Arthur," she murmured to me, "I have long thought this. I knew you could not be a stranger to us. I knew my heart could not deceive me so. My son, my child," she added lovingly, "oh, let me be a mother to you, in truth and deed—let me be all that your own mother might have been to you."

"Even so," I answered, "mother, even so. Now and for evermore."

CHAPTER VI.

EVENING had come and he still slept on, and still I watched by the side of his bed. The medical man had called, and, when he found him sleeping, had not attempted to wake him, saying, that sleep was more powerful for good with him than all the medicine which he could order. I stole away from his bedside for a few moments and held a hurried consultation with the doctor. I thought it only right to inform his medical attendant that his patient had suffered considerable excitement during the day, and to beg him to inform me candidly of the sick man's state.

"You are his son, sir?" the doctor said inquiringly, looking me keenly in the face.

"No," I answered; "unfortunately his son is absent for the time, but we expect him hourly. I am his nephew, sir," I went on, "and he is very dear to me; and I beg of you to let me know precisely how he is."

He laid his hand kindly upon my shoulder as he answered me. "I do not attempt to conceal from you," he said, "that he is very ill. There is a gradual breaking up of the system; and I have no reason to believe that he will rally. He may linger for a week, perhaps even longer, or he may

pass away in three or four days. This depends upon a variety of circumstances which may unexpectedly occur, and overthrow all the calculations which our knowledge enables us to make." As he saw me turn my face away, he added, in a kind and gentle voice—"But he will pass away without pain; and it may be some consolation to you, my friend, to know that he will probably be sensible to the very last."

It was but a poor consolation to me, indeed—but, it was a consolation, nevertheless, to know even this. It was the best that he could give me, too, and it was kind of him to do it, and I was truly grateful for his consideration.

I think it was about eight o'clock in the evening when my uncle opened his eyes, and I was glad to find him much refreshed by his long sleep. I knew that his first thought would be about his boy, and, so, I whispered to him, "not yet, dear uncle, not yet, but very soon. He will be here, please God, very soon."

He sighed heavily but did not speak. For the next half hour or so he might have been asleep, he remained so still and quiet, and I did not seek to disturb him, for, I knew full well that he had talked too much already. It was getting on to nine o'clock, as well as I remember, when once more he drew me down and whispered something in my ear—something which sent my blood all rushing wildly through my veins—as for the moment I thought I must have misunderstood

him, till he repeated the self-same words which I thought that I had heard before.

"Arthur, will you speak to me of God," he said; "and, if you please," he added, as meekly and as humbly as a little child, "if you please, I should like to die in your religion, if you will only teach me how."

He turned his poor pale face to mine once more and looked into my eyes. I would have spoken to him but I could not form the words. I only sank upon my knees, and kissed his hand, and tried to say: "Thank God for this. Oh! thank God for this more than for all the rest. Thank God, a thousand thousand times for this!"

When I was a little more composed, he went on to tell me that it was not now for the first time that he had thought of this—that it had often been upon his mind of late, and more especially since my ordination—that he had delayed and put it off from time to time, but that the season for delay had passed. He added that he knew much more of our religion than I imagined; and concluded in the same meek, humble strain: "Oh Arthur, let me die a Catholic, if you please. Oh, let me die in your religion."

I don't know what I said to him—I could not pen it down, I think, if I attempted; only, I am sure, that I poured hot and burning words of love and heartfelt gratitude into his ear, as I promised him that all that could be done should be done without delay—as I promised him in the

name of God that all should yet be well with him—that peace and rest should be his lot for evermore.

I left him to go down and tell his wife of what had to come to pass—of the wondrous change which God's right hand had wrought—and to summon a venerable priest, who resided near them, to his bedside. I had been so excited by the startling events of the last twelve hours, that, for this and for other obvious reasons, I deemed it best to leave this work to be done by other and more worthy hands than mine; although, I am quite sure, he would have asked no other ministry than my own. When, in a few and broken words, I had told her this consoling news, she did not answer me a syllable, but turned away and fell upon her knees before the crucifix that stood in her room, with her face between her hands. Although I saw that her frame trembled and shook with the violence of her emotion, I did not seek to speak to her, to reason with her, or to soothe her. I left her alone with God. I left her heart to speak to His, knowing that the prayer of her life had been heard at last—knowing that she was pouring out her soul to Him—knowing, too, how He was speaking in return to her, and that, in truth, she stood not in need of word of mine—that there was no place for me to step in between that faithful, loving, long-enduring woman and her God—that their communing was far too sacred, far too tender, and too holy, for me to dare to break in upon it by act or word of mine.

I despatched a servant for the venerable priest to whom I have alluded. In about half an hour's time I went up again to my uncle's room. I found her there before me, kneeling by his side, her hand in his, her crucifix resting on his breast. I thought to spend the night with him, but she would not hear of it; and, as he added his entreaties to hers, I went down to my room, ostensibly to take a few hours' rest; more, indeed, in order to satisfy them, than because I felt that I could sleep, although in truth, I was very, very weary. Charley had not come, and, until he arrived, and I had led him to his father's feet, I knew full well that there would be very little rest or sleep for me. What perplexed me more than all was the information I had received from the servants, who had been sent to summon him, that he was nowhere to be found. He had not been at his lodgings for several days, and there they knew nothing of him; neither had he been seen at his club, and the servants returned as void of information as they had departed. What I was to do I could not tell. He might, and the thought was agony to me, have even left the country. It might be days, it might be weeks, before I could come at him; and all the while, his father's life was measured but by minutes—all the while his father's life was fading more and more away—all the while I knew that if his coming were but long delayed, he would never look upon his father's face again—would never hear the whis-

pered words of pardon and of peace, which alone could bring peace to him now, or shed one ray of happiness upon his future life—and, with all this upon my mind, it was not likely that there would be much rest or sleep for me.

It was getting on to midnight, I think, as I still sat with my head resting on my hands, pondering till I was sick at heart with disappointment and anxiety about the disappearance of Charley, and what excuse I should make to my uncle for the absence of his son. Suddenly I was roused from my reverie by what seemed to me a gentle rapping at my window. My nerves had been so overwrought by the occurrences which had followed so fast on one another during this day of surprise and excitement, that it is little wonder if I were greatly startled, and, for the moment, even seriously frightened by such an unexpected incident. I have forgotten to mention that the room which I always occupied during my visits to them was on the ground floor, the window opening out into the garden. It was from this window that the sound which I have mentioned seemed to proceed. I thought at first that it was merely the effect of an over-excited imagination, and I had risen to my feet, in order to take a few turns up and down the room, that I might thus compose myself, when again the same noise was repeated, only more distinctly, and, as it seemed to me, more impatiently than before. There was no mistake this time, at all events, and I came to

a sudden stand in the middle of the room, undecided what course to take next. My first impulse, most undoubtedly, was to ring my bell and summon the servants, and I was proceeding to put this into execution when I was stopped by the rapping being again repeated louder than ever; and, as I involuntarily turned towards the window, I heard a voice, which I knew full well, although indeed it sounded strangely in my ears at such a time, exclaiming, "Arthur, Arthur, let me in—make no noise, but, for God's sake, let me in!"

I undid the fastenings of the window as quickly as my trembling hands would allow me and threw it open. With a pale and haggard face, with bloodshot eyes, and his golden hair all tossed and dishevelled, with his clothes streaming with wet, for it had come on to rain heavily, the dying man's son stepped in through the open window, looking more like a corpse than a living being himself, and stood before me with such a fearful terror-stricken look upon his face, as I trust that I may never see on human face again. Before he spoke to me, or even took my hand, he looked hastily round the room to see if I were alone, then he went to the window, closed and fastened it, dropped the heavy curtain over it, and, when this was done, threw himself heavily upon the nearest chair, and laid his head with a wearied, reckless air upon the table. He had not spoken a word to me yet, and the whole affair had taken me too

much by surprise to allow me to utter a syllable, but, in a few seconds, I somewhat recovered my composure, and, going over to him, I laid my hand upon his head, as it rested upon the table, and said to him, "Charley, oh, thank God, that you have come, your presence is sorely needed here; but, why have you come thus, in such a strange manner, and in such a fearful plight," I added; "surely, surely, there was no need for this?"

As I spoke he sprang to his feet and glared at me almost fiercely. He was so changed in every way that I could scarcely realize for the moment that it was he, my friend, the handsome, careless off-hand youth whom I had learnt to identify with everything dashing and thoughtless. I took it for granted, of course, that he had heard of his father's illness, and, hence, the change in his appearance, which told of such a fearful war within. I was, under this supposition, about to console and comfort him, but, before I could say a word, he had broken out in a strain as wild and reckless as his appearance, hurrying on so vehemently, that, perforce, I could for some time do nothing but listen to him in astonishment and horror.

"Why do you thank God that I have come?" he asked, staring at me wildly. "When you hear what I have to say," he went on, "I think you will rather turn your back upon me, and bid me begone, that the curse of God, which has fallen upon me, may not be brought into this peaceful house. I am lost and ruined," he continued,

great sobs beginning to rise in his throat. "I am an outcast and a reprobate. I am utterly undone, and I don't know what has brought me hither, except that I had nowhere else to go; and, now, that I am here, if I could only lay down and die in peace, I would ask for nothing more."

"Oh, Charley, Charley, don't talk in such a fearful way," I answered; "have you not heard," I was going on, for his words filled me not less with horror than surprise, but he interrupted me.

"I have heard nothing," he cried as fiercely as before, "and I care for nothing. I am ruined," he went on, "and what need I care for anything else? and I tell you, that I don't care, either. Let them do as they wish, for it is all the same to me."

He clenched his hands and tore his hair in very agony, as he paced with hasty steps up and down the room, casting defiant glances round him as he did so. I threw my arms about him, and, somehow, got him into a chair. He strove to shake me off, but I clung to him, and threw myself on my knees before him, holding him in his chair, till I could soothe and pacify him, and learn what had occurred thus fearfully to move him; for, I already guessed from his incoherent words that he had not heard of what was going on under the roof to which, I could not help feeling, that God had brought him.

"Charley," I said, still kneeling before him, and

looking, I know, with a loving, earnest gaze into his face. "Charley, be a man, and compose yourself. I am ignorant of what has happened to you," I continued, "but I cannot help but see that some misfortune has befallen you. Tell me what it is, Charley, my dearest and my oldest friend, and doubt not but I shall be able to help you through it. No matter what it may be—no matter how foolish you may have been, you will not be one whit less dear to me; the only change that it can make will be to render me a thousand times more anxious to labour for your welfare and to chase away your pain, than I have ever been. You will never find a truer friend than I am. You will never find one to love you half so well. I have claims upon your confidence which you little imagine at present. Only tell me, Charley, what it is—only tell it to your oldest and your dearest friend, and all will yet be well."

Even as I spoke, I could see that he was softening; and, as I continued to plead with burning words, which I do not now remember, but, which my love for him supplied in full abundance, the great sobs came rising faster in his throat, and his head came drooping, drooping, nearer to my face, as I knelt before him, and pleaded for his confidence, as, perhaps, I had never pleaded before. At last he let it fall upon my shoulder, and, when I felt his poor cold face, all wet with tears, resting against my own, I raised my hands and put them round his neck,

and drew him closer to me still, striving, as best I could, to pacify him by soft and gentle words—and, this, not only because he was my friend and very dear to me, but, more than all, because I knew that he had wandered from his father's house; because I knew that he had been, like many a one before him, very wild, and very thoughtless, and very foolish; and because I knew that He, whose servant I aspired to be, had taught me, both by word and by His own Divine example, that it was thus I was to take the wanderer and the sinner to my heart and love. "Oh, Charley, Charley, only tell me what it is, my friend," I cried, "only tell me what it is."

Bending down his weary head, with many a choking sob, at last he told me his sad tale of foolishness and woe. Sometimes he stopped, and seemed unable from shame and grief to proceed, but I encouraged him, and he went on, till all was told. The end was worse than I had even anticipated, but, yet, thank God, it was not so bad as, at first sight, it appeared to be. One of his false friends had obtained from him, so it was asserted, in some moment of dissipation a note for £150, signed with Colonel Morley's name. *This signature was forged.* Charley, himself, confessed to me, in broken words, that he had never had such a note from his father, and that the whole affair must be a forgery.

It was a fearful blow, and I could not help exclaiming, "Oh, Charley, how could you do it!

How could you do it! How could you be so foolish!"

"But, Arthur," he cried out in an agonizing voice, "I did not do it. Heaven knows, I did not do it. I have been very foolish, very mad, and wicked; but I have not been so bad as that. Langley swears that I gave him the note one night when, he says, I was the worse for wine. When he first showed it to me, I was pierced with horror and surprise. I had no recollection whatever of it; but he says that he has a witness to swear he saw me give it to him for money I had lost to him at cards. For the last month he has been bullying me for payment, offering to give me the bill if I would purchase it of him at nearly twice its value; threatening me, on the other hand, to present it to my father, and thus test at once whether it is genuine or forged. If he does this, I am ruined, Arthur, ruined without hope of redemption, and, what is worse than all, I shall break my father's heart with sorrow and with shame."

It was infinitely painful to me to hear him speaking in such unconsciousness of his father's hopeless state, but I did not think the moment had yet come to break the sad news to him. Moreover, although he spoke with such a tone of earnestness and truth that it was hard indeed to doubt him, still, the whole story seemed so strange and so improbable that I could scarcely, at the moment, give full credence to it. I know that I

wronged him by my suspicion; but still it was so natural under the circumstances that it could scarcely have been otherwise. He must have seen some sign of disbelief or doubt upon my face, for he undid my arms from his neck and turned his head away, more in sorrow than in anger.

"You do not believe me, Arthur," he said; "you do not believe my tale; and, in truth, how can I blame you; and yet," he added with another choking sob, "if I had thought *you* would not have believed me I would never have told *you* this sad tale, but it is no matter. It cannot make much difference to me now, only hear me, Arthur," he cried with sudden energy, and before I guessed what he was at, he had thrown himself upon his knees, and raised his hands above his head, "only hear me, Arthur. I call God to witness that I did not forge my father's name. I did not do that wicked deed. I would have died ere I had come to that."

I had no longer any doubt. If all the world had come and told me that my friend had forged his father's name, I would not have believed it now.

"Forgive me, Charley," I answered quickly. "I have wronged you; pray, forgive me. You need not have called God to witness to the truth of what you say. I have known you for many a year, and I have never known you tell a lie. It has been my pride to think you full of honour and

of truth; and, believe me, Charley, I never trusted in your truth more fully and completely than I do this moment. I believe you, my friend, with all my heart and soul—indeed, indeed I do.”

I raised him from the ground and placed him in his chair, and prayed him to proceed. He clasped my hand in both of his and went on:—

“Langley came to me, yesterday,” he resumed, “and urged me to accept his proffered conditions. If I had possessed the money, Arthur, I would have done so, although I know it is a foul conspiracy; but, I deserve it all, for having left my home, and those who were ever so loving and so true to me, for the company of villains such as these. I had not £20 in the world, much less £250, which he demanded. I begged and prayed, I even went upon my knees and besought him to give me time—to wait until my next allowance was due and that I would pay him all—for that I could not, and I durst not write to my father for more money now. He only answered me with a sneer, saying, that was my business and not his. He said he would not wait another day, and left me, swearing that he would come down at once, present the note to my father, and demand his money; adding, once more, like a fiend, that then the truth would come out, and that this was my affair, not his. Oh, Arthur, my brain grew all on fire,” he cried, “and I knew not what to do. I saw ruin and misery before me—for, although you believe me, will the world believe this tale?” Alas! alas!

I was fain to confess in my inmost heart that it would not.

"I knew not where to go. I was afraid to venture into the street lest I might find myself proclaimed as a forger and a swindler; but, in the midst of all my terror and confusion, something seemed to urge me, instinctively, to go to my mother—to hurry away from that hideous town and find my mother—to lay me down and die, if so I might, at my mother's feet. Without waiting to eat or drink, as soon as dusk set in, I hurried away with that one thought for ever growing in my soul, to find my mother and hide my sorrow and my shame for ever at her feet. It was midnight when I got here, and I was afraid to summon the servants to let me into the house. I prowled about until I saw the light in your room, and I guessed that you were here. I thanked God for that; yes, indeed, Arthur, I did thank God for that, with all the fervour of my sinful heart, for I knew that you would help me—I knew that you would never forsake me—and, at last, I took courage and rapped for you to let me in—to let me in, even like a thief—to let me in, even like a shame-stricken prodigal, as I am, into my father's house."

"Oh, Charley," I said, clasping him to my heart, "oh, Charley, thank God that you have come. Thank God for that—for there is nought but love, and peace, and full forgiveness for you here."

As I held him in my arms he sobbed and cried upon my breast like a broken-hearted child—"What shall I do—what shall I do. Oh, Arthur, I shall break their loving hearts; what shall I do?"

"Charley," I said in a solemn voice, for I knew that the time had come *now*, "Charley, be calm and compose yourself, for I have something very serious to say to you, something which will require all your fortitude to hear. As to the matter of which you have just told me, we will speak of it a little later on; and, do not doubt, but that we shall be able to arrange it. But, there is something to be thought of even before that—ten thousand times more pressing and important than that can ever be." He looked at me with wondering eyes and I proceeded—"Charley, my friend, strange things have come to pass beneath this roof within the last few hours. A strange revelation has been made to me by one who is most dear to me, and surely, Charley, dearer still to you—a revelation which I fondly hope will have no other effect than to bind us nearer still to one another in the bonds of a never-failing love. Ask me no questions, now. This is no time nor place for them; but, Charley, listen to me," I went on, as the wondering look grew deeper on his face; "your father has told me within the last few hours that he was my father's only brother, and that he and his are my nearest friends upon this earth; and, tell me now, my friend," I asked, "tell me, is this a piece of news which you are glad to hear,

tell me, shall this be a link to bind us closer to one another than we have ever been."

He drew me nearer to him, and kissed me on the brow, and whispered to me, "Arthur, we are brothers now in very deed. I cannot love you more than I already do, but this, at least gives me a stronger claim upon your solicitude and care; and, believe me, Arthur, I will strive, with all my heart and soul, to render myself more worthy of your love and confidence than I have lately done; oh, believe me, when I promise this, and help me how to do it, for I am very weak and frail."

"I do believe you, Charley," I answered, "I do believe you, and I know that all will yet be well. But," I continued, "prepare yourself for something that will surely try you more, my friend—try you, I know full well, to the very utmost. It pleases God to send us heavy trials for His own wise ends; and such a trial, Charley, hangs over you and me. Oh, then, let us try and bear it like men—heavy though it be. I have come here, Charley," I went on, grasping him more tightly in my arms as I spoke, "because it has pleased God to send a serious sickness to your father, and he now lies very, very ill."

I was going on, but he stopped me with a fearful cry that sounded loudly through the silent room. "Arthur, tell me the truth," he gasped, "tell me the truth at once. My darling father, he is dead, and I have killed him—God forgive me, I have killed him. Tell me," he

cried more wildly, struggling in my arms till I could scarcely hold him, "tell me, did he die with a curse upon his lips for the base prodigal who deserted *him* for the villains who have brought me to the brink of hell. Tell me this, I say, for I care for nothing now; and if I have his curse upon me, the sooner the end comes the better it will please me. Oh, my father, I can bear the rest—the rest is but a trifle and not worth a thought; but you, my father, I have killed you—God forgive me, I have surely killed you."

"Nay, Charley," I cried, soothing him as I would have done a little child, "nay Charley, be a man. Take heart, it is not so bad as this. Your father is alive, and waits with longing love for your arrival; and, believe me, Charley," I went on, "and you know I would not deceive you, believe me, my friend, I have been with him nearly all this day, and I know that there is not a feeling in his heart towards you save those of peace, of love, of full forgiveness."

As I spoke thus to him with hurried words, he broke out afresh into great sobs which seemed almost to choke him; but, above all, there rose his wailing cry, "Oh, take me to him, Arthur, oh, take me to him, that I may get his pardon ere it be too late."

I begged him still more earnestly to compose himself, impressing upon him the absolute necessity of putting a restraint upon his feelings, since any excitement might be fatal to his

father. I made him change his clothes, and smooth his dishevelled hair. I pressed him to drink some wine which I poured from a decanter which stood upon the table, but he would not taste it, merely swallowing a glass of water. Again urging him to compose himself as much as possible, and, indeed, he was like a little child in my hands now, I stole up stairs to the sick man's room. I found him awake. He greeted me with the same gentle look as ever, and as I bent down to whisper to him that his son had come and waited anxiously to see him, a smile, so full of love and joy that it filled my heart to very overflowing with thankfulness to God to see it, passed across his pale and wasted face. I heard him begging God to bless me, for that I was very good to him. And, then, I went to lead the wanderer to his father's feet. With slow and faltering steps, as was indeed but just—with downcast head, as did in truth become him—he followed me through the silent house until we reached his father's room. I opened the door and stood aside that he might enter in; but I did not seek to follow him. I waited but for one brief moment, till I had seen him rush across the room and throw himself upon his knees, and, with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, cry out for pardon and forgiveness—till I had seen the old man take him in his arms and lay the weary head upon a father's loving breast—till I had seen him press the kiss of peace upon the wanderer's face—


till I had heard his broken voice, "For this my son was dead and is alive again—was lost and is found;" and, then, I softly closed the door and crept away that, in the silence and the stillness of that solemn hour, I might hide my face between my hands and weep hot tears of grateful thankfulness to God that there was peace at last between two weary hearts; feeling, too, that there was no room for me at such a time and place—that none but God might see what passed between the old man and his child—that none but God's own eye might look upon the solemn communings of that sacred hour.

CHAPTER VII.

I WAS glad to get back to the solitude of my room that I might have an opportunity of revolving in my mind the sad story which my friend had told me, that I might consider the means by which he was to be extricated from the fearful position in which he had placed himself. I was weary enough in body by this time, but I was wearier still in mind, as I sat, in the midnight hours, trying to see my way through the difficulties which enveloped the case on every side. I did not entertain the slightest doubt but that the affair was a vile conspiracy, and that this Langley had contrived to obtain some signature or other of my uncle's which he had either copied himself, or had got copied, and affixed to this pretended note. But, how was this to be proved? It was well-known that Charley had been in the habit of frequenting the company of Langley; and, if one of his associates was prepared to swear that he had seen Charley give the forged note to Langley on account of money lost at play, who would believe my friend's assertion that the whole affair was a conspiracy, got up, as was plain to me, for the purpose of alarming him and keeping him under the clutches of the vile set, into whose hands he had so unfortunately fallen? I was fain to confess, in the

bitterness of my soul, that appearances were completely against my friend. The more I thought of it the more I became convinced that the only way of meeting the difficulty was by obtaining possession of the note in order to destroy it. I saw, too, that this must be accomplished at once. Abstracting, for the moment, from the fact that my friend must be miserable so long as the forged note remained in the hands of his enemy, I was urged on more powerfully to this conclusion by my knowledge that my uncle was on his deathbed, and that it was possible that Langley might hear of this, might hurry down and cause a disturbance, which I feared to contemplate, in the house of the dying man. That this would be his mode of acting, if by any chance he should hear of the state of affairs, I was quite convinced; for, with the death of my uncle, he would, of course, lose his opportunity of proving that the signature to the note was forged, without, indeed, he were prepared to assert that he had *seen* Charley forge his father's name; and I doubted whether he, scoundrel as he evidently was, would dare go so far as this. I sat revolving all these contingencies till I was sick at heart. For some time I felt disposed to leave things as they were, and trust to Providence. It seemed to me absolutely cruel to speculate on my uncle's death—to let it enter, even remotely, into my calculations, although I knew, humanly speaking, that his hours were numbered; but I had to take the consideration and grapple with it, albeit, my

very soul seemed to shrink with horror from it. *If* the note were presented to him, or, if the existence of it came to his knowledge, he would, of course, know that it was a forgery. Langley was prepared to swear that the forgery had been committed, or, at all events, that the forged note had been given to him by Charley, and the only thing that was perfectly clear to me as yet was that this must be prevented at any cost—that the last moments of the dying man must be disturbed by no such pang as this, that the two hearts which had only just come together after so many years of cruel separation, and of still more cruel misunderstanding, must not be wrenched asunder by such a cause as this. But, *if* my uncle passed away in peace, *if* he should have entered into his rest before Langley had heard of his illness, then the case was plain, and all that he could effect would be to present the note, and, as my uncle no longer lived to say that it was forged, receive the sum named in it. But, could I rely upon this *if*, could I prudently run this risk? There was the difficulty which I could not see my way through, although I thought and thought, revolving every possible chance, until I was weary almost unto death, and was fain to rise from my seat, and bathe my burning temples in the water of my jug. No, I durst not risk it. This was the conclusion to which I came. It was probable enough that Langley might have heard of my uncle's serious illness ere this. Charley had been absent



from his usual haunts for several days, and it was most likely that they had missed him, and, if so, doubtless they had not failed to make enquiries concerning him. If Langley happened by any chance to call at Charley's lodgings, he would, of course, hear that Colonel Morley was very ill, and that his servants had been there enquiring for his son in order to summon him to his father's bedside. If Langley should once receive this news, I had not the slightest doubt in my own mind as to the course he would take. I felt certain that he would hurry down at once, and either compel my friend to make such terms as would place him still more completely under the villain's power, or, endeavour to force his way to my uncle's side, and there make the fearful charge which would inevitably kill him on the spot. And even, supposing that he came and we succeeded in keeping him from the sick man's room, he would, out of mere spite, no doubt, circulate his vile story amongst the domestics of the house, and my friend's reputation would be blasted beyond the hope of reparation. There was only one chance and it was a desperate one, but I resolved to try it, viz., to start for London at once, and, trusting to the hope that Langley had not yet heard how matters stood, obtain the note from him by some means or other as the course of events should suggest. Although it has only taken me a few minutes to write all this down, it took me several hours to come to this conclusion. It appeared to me the last chance

of saving my friend, and, hence, I would try it at any cost. It never crossed my mind that I might be acting illegally in endeavouring to make a compromise with the scoundrel who had woven such a net about my friend; the only thought I had was, that my friend was in a fearful strait, and that I, with God's help, would rescue him from his peril, if human industry or ingenuity could effect it. I think it was about three o'clock, and after I had quite made up my mind as to the course I would take, when one of the servants came to tell me that the clergyman for whom I had sent had just arrived, having travelled all night. His arrival was a wonderful relief to me, as now I could leave my uncle's side for a few hours with more confidence. I think I almost viewed his coming, so promptly and so opportunely, as an approbation of Providence on my designs for the saving of my friend. I took my candle and hurried down to welcome him. I explained to him as briefly as I could how matters stood in regard to my uncle, and begged of him, although, indeed, I knew that this was quite superfluous, to do his best to smooth the old man's passage to the grave. I said nothing, of course, about my friend, but I told him, that I should be obliged to leave for London in two or three hours, and that I would return as soon as possible. He understood the case at once. He was an old man, and his hair was white with the snow of years. He had far more experience

than myself in the ways of God, in the mysterious workings of Providence; and God alone knows how my heart swelled with gratitude at being able to avail myself of his assistance at such a time. I left him for a few moments until I went up to inform my uncle of his arrival. I found him with his head upon the bosom of his son—I found him resting in the loving arms which held him, oh, so tenderly and so fondly, to the heart which was nearly broken with sorrow and distress. It cost me a pang to separate them, even for so holy a purpose as mine; but I whispered to him that the priest was come and waited anxiously to see him. He looked at me for an instant so thankfully, so lovingly, so trustingly, that I was fain to turn away my face and hide the tears which I could not restrain. In a moment more he tried to raise his face that his son might kiss him. As the wanderer bent down once more and laid his face against his father's, I saw that he was about to break out into a paroxysm of grief, and so I got him in my arms and led him from the room. I left him alone for a few minutes until I introduced the man of God to him who waited so anxiously for his presence, and then I hurried down again to Charley. When I entered, his head was resting wearily upon his hands, but when he heard me he raised his face and looked at me so piteously, with such a worn and broken air, as might have pierced a harder heart than mine. A moment more and he turned away his head as if utterly

ashamed to look me in the face, but, before I could get over to him, he had risen wildly from his seat, had thrown himself upon the ground before me, and was clinging to my knees, begging me, with cries which it nearly broke my heart to hear, to pray to God to pardon his great sin—to help him in his fearful need. I strove my utmost, but I could not raise him from the ground. I managed to get a chair, and when I had done this, I sat down and let him rest his face upon my knees, whilst I did my best, my very best, to soothe and comfort him. God knows it was a weary sight to look upon his poor pale face and see how suddenly the blighting mark of grief had fallen upon its pleasant features. God knows it was a weary sight to mark the anguish and the fearful wildness of those soft blue eyes which, but so short a time ago, had seemed as if they could never reflect aught but joy and laughing carelessness—to see the tossed dishevelled hair which, but so short a time ago, had shone so brightly in its golden masses round his swelling brow. God knows it was a weary, weary sound to listen to the fearful cries which broke the silence of the waning night—to hear him wail for ever and for aye, “My father—God forgive me—oh, my father, oh, my father,” and to be unable to soothe him or to carry one drop of comfort to his broken heart. It was a weary thing to see him turn away his head so hopelessly, to feel him trying to release himself from my arms, to know

that he was endeavouring, in the bitterness of his self-accusation, to steel himself against the comfort which I sought to give him. He had never been so dear to me, I had never felt my heart so drawn to him, as I did now as he knelt before me, and, in the fulness of his sorrow and contrition for the past, refused to let me comfort him. I struggled with him long and earnestly, struggled, indeed, till my face was wet with tears, my voice broken with sobs; and, then, at last, thank God, with two or three great cries, he laid his head upon my breast with all the gentle meekness of a little child, whispering all the while that he had no will but mine—that I might do with him even as I would. What I did with him was, to bring his mother to him and leave him in her arms.

The unexpected shock which he had received from his father's illness, and the agitation which was its natural consequence, seemed to have banished from his mind, at all events for the time, the recollection of the sad affair which he had told me of on his arrival, and I was glad that it was so. Still, I did not for an instant waver in my own determination, nor doubt of the course which I should take. His father was ignorant of his son's foolishness, for I had warned Charley against mentioning the matter to either of his parents. I was resolved that neither of them should ever hear a syllable of it, if any effort of mine could prevent it.

It was daylight now, and as I heard the ser-

vants moving about, I rang the bell and ordered them to have a carriage at the door for me at eight o'clock. I was so tired that I could scarcely stand, and I was thinking of taking an hour's rest before I set off on my strange mission, when I received a summons to my uncle's room. The priest had never left his side, and the sick man was now about to receive the conditional baptism which was to make him, in truth, a member of God's blessed Church. My uncle wished us all to be present at the touching ceremony—nay, more, he prayed that my hand might pour the saving water on his head. Before I did so, he once again, in meek and lowly words, craved my pardon and forgiveness for the wrong which he had done me. I could not answer him in words, but I looked into his eyes all that I would have said, and then I poured the blessed water on his head and made him one of God's own chosen ones. I gave him once more the kiss of peace, gave it to him with all the fervour of my heart and soul, with more of humble thankfulness for all that God had done for us, than I either can or desire to express in words.

When he had rested for a few moments I proceeded, as cautiously as I could, to break to him the news of my intended journey. I saw at once the pain it gave him, and how much he felt it. "Arthur," he said to me, clinging to my hands, "you promised not to leave me. You promised not to leave me till I was at rest," he continued, in a

low, sad voice, "and I shall not keep you long; but, don't leave me, Arthur, oh, don't leave me, and I will never ask another favour from you. Arthur, please, don't leave me."

I fell upon my knees by the side of his bed, and took his wasted hand in mine. "I promised not to leave you, uncle," I answered him; "and, God knows how faithfully I intended to keep that promise, with what reluctance I tear myself from your side, even for an hour. But, uncle," I went on, "circumstances have arisen which I could not have foreseen, and which compel me to leave you for a little while. I have no choice," I pleaded, "I have no choice. I cannot tell you what it is, but, if I could, you would be the first, indeed, indeed you would, to tell me to depart. Trust me, uncle, take me at my word. I know no cause on earth save this which should have torn me from you, but this admits of no delay. A single hour's delay may bring forth fruits which a life can never repair. It almost breaks my heart to leave you; but, if you will not let me go, and if that which I fear should, therefore, come to pass, I think that I shall never raise my head again. Besides, dear uncle," I continued, as he looked at me with wondering eyes, "I trust that I shall return in a few hours. Your son is by your side. The priest of God will never leave you, but will stay to perfect and finish the good work which he has begun. Then, dear uncle, oh, believe me, for in truth I *must* go. I must set off at once. Bid me,

then, depart; let me think that I have gone with your consent, and the knowledge will give my steps fresh speed to hasten back to you, for I promise you that I will return without one single instant of unnecessary delay. Only bid me go. Only tell me that I may set off."

The wondering look gave way to one of confidence and trusting love as he bade me, in God's name, set off, set off at once, that I might the sooner come back to him; for that he could not be altogether happy, altogether at rest, unless he had me by his side.

I whispered a few loving words to him. I was going to kiss his hand, but he drew me down to him and pressed his lips upon my brow, and then I left his room, doubting, indeed, whether I might ever see his face again, but quite certain, nevertheless, that, even if it were so, I was doing what was right—doing precisely what he would have wished me to do, if I could have told him the object of my journey.

I heard them following me from the room. One glance at the scared and frightened look that was imprinted on both their faces told me, more plainly than any words, how much they had been affected by the few sentences which had passed between me and the dying man. "Charley," I said, turning to my friend, "go down to my room, and I will follow you in a few moments; meanwhile, mother," I added, in my tenderest tone, "let me have a word with you."

She took my hands in hers, and it was only when I felt how fearfully she trembled that I understood how deeply my words had moved her. The moment we were inside her room she placed her hands upon my shoulders, and turned her pale, scared face to mine. "Arthur," she said, her voice trembling all the while till I could scarcely catch her words, "Arthur, what is the meaning of this sudden resolution? What can it be that has called you away from us at such a time, and in such haste? It must be something very terrible. Oh, for God's sake, Arthur, tell me what it is. Oh, tell me what it is," and her voice died away in sobs, as her head drooped and fell upon my breast.

"Mother," I asked, "can you trust me? Can you trust me fully and without reserve?"

"Fully," she sobbed, "fully, Arthur; but, for God's sake, tell me what it is."

"Mother," I answered, "*I cannot* tell you what it is; but, believe and trust me, when I say that nothing but the direst need should take me from your side in such an hour as this."

As I spoke she raised her face, more pale and terror-stricken than ever, from off my breast, and asked me in a low hoarse voice, "Oh, tell me, Arthur, tell me, does this concern my boy? Oh, let me know the worst."

"Mother," I answered again, "*I cannot* tell you. Oh, indeed, I cannot, and I beg you, for all our sakes, do not ask me to say more."

Only," I added, "if you can trust me, prove your confidence in me, and bid me go."

Once more her poor pale face fell down despairingly upon my breast, whilst great sobs that shook her frame came rising in her throat; yet, amidst them all, she raised her head for one brief instant, and looked into my face and whispered to me that she trusted me even to my lightest thought—that she trusted me without reserve, and bade me go.

"Oh, mother," I replied, as well as I was able, "mother, I thank you from my inmost soul for this; and, believe me," I added, "you will not repent of the confidence you have placed in me."

She turned away with the sorrowing look still deeper on her face, when she had taken leave of me, after beseeching me to return without a moment's unnecessary delay. I was already leaving the room, when it flashed across my mind that I must have money, that I must have a large sum of money to be ready to meet Langley's demands, or buy his silence; and I turned to her again, this time without a moment's hesitation.

"Mother, I had forgotten," I said, "to tell you that I must have money; ten times a larger sum than all that I possess on earth; without it, the object which takes me hence may be altogether defeated. Can you trust me further still, and let me have what I require?"

She rose at once, and unlocked her desk. "How much do you want, Arthur?" I heard her say, and

I had scarcely answered ere she placed in my hand a cheque for £300, the sum for which I had asked.

"May God Almighty bless you, dearest mother," I said, hot tears of love and gratitude streaming down my face. "May God reward you to the full; and, mother," I continued earnestly, "pray with all your might that He may deign to bless this undertaking and crown it with success. Pray for this with all your heart and soul."

"I will, I will," she answered through her tears. "May God protect, and bring you back again to us without delay."

I closed the door and went out to seek my friend. I found him waiting for me in the passage, and the moment he saw me leave his mother's room, he hurried up to me and began to question me. I was afraid lest any of the servants, who were moving about the house, might interrupt us, and so I took him down to my room before I attempted to answer his impetuous questions. I made him seat himself upon the sofa by my side, and, after I had tried to soothe him by a few loving words, for he was fearfully agitated, I made him acquainted with my design, and the determination to which I had come. I assured him again of my conviction that he was innocent of the forgery imputed to him; but I did not seek to hide from him the peril in which, nevertheless, he was placed. I went on to assure him how confident I was of success in my endeavour to extricate him from the position in which he had so thoughtlessly

put himself. I told him that all I asked of him, meanwhile, was to be calm and composed, to do all he could to cheer and comfort his mother, to leave nothing undone that his father's last moments (if God had decreed that he was to leave us) might be full of peace and joy, full of love and tender memories; and I finished with a few brief but earnest words to the effect that he was the dearest friend I had upon the earth, and that I would do for him whatever mortal man might do for dearest and most cherished brother—that I begged of him to believe in the fathomless depth of my love for him, and that as he believed in it, to be calm for *my* sake, and not add to the grief which was already pressing so heavily on his mother—that I begged of him, above all, to pray to God for himself and for me, that I might be able to effect that on which my whole soul was set.

As I had gone on I had felt him stealing nearer, nearer to me; but, as I concluded, he caught me in his arms and strained me to his breast, and cried aloud, as if the very fountains of his heart were broken up—cried as, perhaps, full-grown men cry but once or twice in their lives—cried with such fierce and bitter sobs as issue from the hearts of *men* alone, when the great trial or the fearful loss, which God's goodness seldom allows to happen more than once or twice, is full upon them in all its crushing grief—in all its bitter hopelessness—in all its dull despair.

“Is it for *me*,” he gasped, “oh, Arthur, is it for

me that you are doing this ; for me that am not worthy of your slightest care? It is *too* much. It is *too* much.

I drew him closer to me as I answered, with emotion scarcely less than his own—" *What* is there in the world I would not do for you, my friend, almost my brother. Charley, what is there in the world which man may do for man that I *ought* not do for you? Nothing—surely, surely nothing."

I begged him once again to calm himself for my sake, for *his* sake, for all our sakes. It was nearly eight o'clock, and at that hour I was to start. As I hastily made the little necessary preparations for my journey Charley followed me about the room with a show of helping me, which I encouraged, as I thought that this might cheer and comfort him. I spoke to him with words of hope and confidence which, in truth, I scarcely felt, and which, when I furtively raised my eyes to glance at him, the sad and sorrow-stricken look that blanched his face chased from my heart. Still, for his dear sake, I would *not* despair, would not resign my hope till every chance had been inevitably closed against us.

As the carriage drove up he took my arm to go down to the door with me. I felt him stagger like a man who had just recovered from a heavy sickness, but I made pretence not to perceive it. I knew that curious eyes were on us, and that there was need of caution. I saw them gazing

with wonder at the "young master's" dishevelled dress and sorrow-stricken face, and I was thankful that his father's serious illness supplied reasons enough for such a change in him.

Before I stepped into the carriage I took both his hands in mine, and looked as hopefully as ever I could into his eyes. "God speed me, Charley," I said, half interrogatively, "God speed me on my way."

He wrung my hands until I almost winced with pain. Great tears were streaming down his face as he answered, "Yes! God speed you, Arthur; God Almighty, in His mercy, speed you on your way."

I waved my hand to him as long as I could see him, and with his "God speed me" ringing in my ears, I drove away as fast as four fleet horses could bear me on my journey.

CHAPTER VIII.

I SNATCHED a few hours' sleep on my journey, for I was completely wearied out; and about three o'clock in the afternoon I arrived in London. My first intention had been to seek out this Langley, and endeavour to obtain the note from him on any terms. Fortunately, I changed my mind, and determined, first of all, to call upon the lawyer whom I knew to be entrusted with the management of Colonel Morley's affairs. I found him at home, and, as briefly as possible, laid the case before him in all its bearings. He listened to me very kindly and very patiently. I was thankful to find that he agreed with me in considering the whole affair as a vile conspiracy. I was more thankful still to think that I had gone to him in the first place, when he informed me that I should probably have ruined everything if I had waited personally upon Langley, and let him know of my intention and my project. "However, you see," he said, shaking his head gravely, "it is an ugly business, and one in which I cannot openly appear or take part. If once this scoundrel, and I know him well," he added emphatically, "gets an inkling in the wind, he will be on his guard, and will not come to any terms. My decided

opinion, *as a lawyer*," he continued cautiously, "is, that we should prosecute this Langley for a conspiracy, and trust to be able to prove it, and so rid the country of a precious villain, who has ruined more young men besides poor Charley Morley."

"But," said I hastily, "suppose we cannot prove it, my friend is blasted for life. Moreover," I added, "the delay would kill him. He would never bear the suspense. No, we cannot take that course. We must take some other, and that at once."

As I have already said, I don't answer for the perfect legality of this course of mine, or how far I was legally right or wrong in consenting, or seeking, to compromise this conspiracy. I thought *only* of my friend and his fearful peril, and I trust that this will be sufficient justification for any legal shortcomings in my conduct in this affair.

The lawyer looked more kindly than ever at me as I impetuously pleaded my friend's cause. "I only spoke as a lawyer," he said, "and, of course, this is the only capacity in which I can advise you. If you are to recover this note, and that without delay, I need scarcely tell you that it will not be through the open assistance of the law. But, I speak to you now in my private capacity, mind," he went on. "Go to your hotel, and in the course of an hour or two I will send a person to you who will manage this affair for you, if there be any man in London who can do it."

As I shook him warmly by the hand he peered

curiously into my face. "Are you a member of the family?" he asked, respectfully. "Yes," I said, "Colonel Morley is my uncle." "Ah, I thought so; I thought I recognized the family likeness. You are Mr. Arthur's son, then, I presume." "Yes," I answered, "I am the only son of Colonel Morley's only brother." After this little dialogue he shook my hand more warmly than before, and I went on my way, hoping already for the best; for, somehow, his words, vague and cautious as they were, had filled me with a confidence which I had not felt previously.

I had been at my hotel a couple of hours or so when the servant brought me a dirty-looking card, on which I read the name of "Mr. David Wilkins." I did not remember at the moment knowing any one of the name, but I ordered Mr. Wilkins to be shown up, nevertheless. In a few moments the gentleman was ushered into my room. He was a little, insignificant looking man, dressed in very shabby black. His head was quite bald and very shiny, and but for the twinkle in his eye, I should have set him down as a decidedly thick and stupid fellow. He made two or three very obsequious bows as he entered the room; and, seeing from my face, that I was perfectly unacquainted with him, and somewhat surprised at his appearance in my apartment, he, by way of introducing himself, muttered something about having been sent to me by Mr. Smithson, the lawyer.

"Oh, I understand," said I, "you are the

detective of whom Mr. Smithson spoke. Pray be seated."

As the word "detective" crossed my lips, a shade stole over the countenance of Mr. Wilkins. "You see, sir," he said, "detective ain't generally considered a nice word; and, so, if it be all the same to you, we won't mind it. My opinion is, that the fewer names is called the fewer bones is broke, and detective *is* considered a name, there's no denying."


"Oh," I answered quickly, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Wilkins, I assure you that I meant no offence."

"Which none is took, sir," he replied very briskly, seating himself as he spoke. "And, now, if you will let me hear the *hins* and the *houts*, (he wasn't particular about his h's) of this 'ere little business it will be took as a favour, for time is very precious, which there's no denying."

I seated myself opposite to him, and proceeded to lay the case before him as clearly as I was able. As he listened to me, with his head very much on one side, he reminded me forcibly of the venerable old rooks, the patriarchs of the flock, which I used to see on the branches of the trees in former days at Morley House. Indeed, although it was very absurd, he reminded me of them so strongly, that I was quite prepared to hear him come out with a vigorous "caw-caw" now and again. He never interrupted me in my narrative, but he marked the strong points of it by an energetic

nod of his head; and it was a great relief to me to see how fully and clearly he took it in at once. I felt, instinctively, that the insignificant-looking little man before me held my friend's fate in his hands, and it is wonderful how much respect I at once began to feel for him, and how much deference I showed towards him on this account. When I came to the matter of the forged note, I was quite startled for the moment by a loud crack which seemed to proceed, mysteriously, from Mr. Wilkins. Upon looking more closely I discovered that he was relieving his feelings (I suppose) by pulling his fingers till the joints cracked quite loudly. It was rather a novel way of relieving one's feelings, certainly; but I suppose that it was *his* way, and if it pleased him and answered his purpose, I don't know that any one else had anything to do with it. I have said that he never interrupted me, but this is not quite true, for, almost simultaneously with the loud report of his finger-joints, I heard him muttering to himself: "Very clumsy, very clumsy," or words to that effect. With this exception, he listened to me patiently till I had concluded, which I did with some hasty words, to the effect that I *must* have this note, and that I did not care if it cost me £300, so long as I once had it in my hand.

When I had done, Mr. Wilkins rubbed his face with his handkerchief, rubbed his knees with the palms of his hands, straightened his body, and prepared himself for a speech. "It's a very hugely



business," he commenced, sententiously, "and I don't mind saying that it's a very hugely business." When he saw how sad my face grew at his words, he added more cheerfully, "But, Lord love you, sir, don't you go and be down-hearted about it, for it's nothing in *my* way. I wouldn't give a fig for it," he went on, "and I wouldn't lose my time over it, if it *wasn't* a hugely business; and, don't you go a wasting of your money either," he went on, "and talking of so many hundreds of pounds as if they was so many black beans, when, maybe, a twenty pound note will do the whole job. It's my opinion, sir, that a man ought to take care of his money. I often hear people abusing money, sir, and saying it's the root of all evil. Now, it's my opinion, sir, that money's the best thing in the world; of course, it's only *my* opinion, and it mayn't be worth a rush; but it *is* my opinion, and when a man has a opinion, sir, I think it's the part of a man to give expression to that opinion," and Mr. Wilkins rubbed his face with the satisfied air of a man who had laid down a principle which can admit of no controversy. Under the circumstances, I scarcely thought it worth while to combat this opinion of Mr. Wilkins's, with which, I need hardly say, that I did not agree, and he presently went on:

"Now, as to this 'ere friend of yours, who has been and got himself into such a pretty scrape! What fools some young men are to be sure," continued Mr. Wilkins, becoming philosophic again. the very moment when I trusted that he w

going to become practical. "They goes and they sows their wild oats as they call 'em, and a very easy business it is to sow that 'ere seed, and a pretty deal of reaping that same crop do take to be sure, to say nothing about the 'arvest when it is reaped. Then, they falls into the hands of such gents as Mr. Langley, and a pretty kettle of fish they make of it. Yes, there's Mr. Langley, and I know him well," continued Mr. Wilkins, putting himself into a highly argumentative attitude. "He ain't a nobleman's son, nor yet a gentleman's. *His* father wasn't a man of property, I believe," with fierce irony. "He ain't no trade, nor a distinguished member of any profession, as the *Times* newspaper would hexpress it; and what I want to know is, where does Mr. Langley get money to pay for his 'broom,' and his dogcart, and his riding horses, and his first-class lodgings, and his fine clothes. Why, there ain't such a dandy in all the 'Row;' and what I want to know is, where does he get his cash—that's what I want to know; and if any person will have the goodness to furnish me with the necessary information," continued Mr. Wilkins with lofty but ironical politeness, "I shall feel extremely obliged to him, and will reward him accordingly."

I think Mr. Wilkins, who was evidently very fond of hearing himself talk, must have seen an impatient look on my face, for, when I thought he would never have done, he suddenly stopped, and took quite a practical tone. "It's plain to me, ~~sir,~~," he said, "to my infinite satisfaction, that

this 'ere scoundrel, hexcuse the hexpression, has played one of his tricks, and I knows 'em well, on this 'ere friend of yourn. I've had my eyes on him this long time, and, if I don't catch you, one of these 'ere fine days, Mr. Langley, my name is not David Wilkins, a humble member of the secret service. It ain't often that Mr. Langley is so clumsy in his work as he has been this time," went on Mr. Wilkins, becoming more and more professional; "and if this 'ere friend of yours would leave the business to me, and let me bring it into court, it would make a beautiful case, and I could prove it quite easy, Lord love you." When he saw how vehemently I shook my head, and heard me protest that I must have the note at once, and, that, whatever was done must be done with the utmost secresy, for, that my friend's fair name must not be made the subject even of suspicion, he gave in to me at once, only muttering that it would have been such a beautiful case, to be sure; but that he would have him before long, or his name wasn't David Wilkins, &c., &c.

He paused for a minute or two, and rubbed his knees violently, his head more on one side than ever. Suddenly he turned to me, and spoke quite briskly. "I suppose, now," he said, "you wouldn't mind a twenty pound note, and no questions asked?"

"Twenty, fifty, a hundred." I answered impetuously.

Mr. Wilkins reproved me for my extravagant

ideas by a severe look, and repeated his philosophical opinions relative to money; repeating, however, that, of course, it was only his opinion. At the same time he rose to his feet and drew from his pocket a watch of a pattern almost as extraordinary as himself. "You're in a great hurry, sir, I believe," he said to me. I told him that this matter kept me from the deathbed of one of my nearest and dearest friends, and that he might judge of my impatience from this. He looked at his watch again before he spoke. "You see, sir," he said, quite practically and earnestly now, laying his hand encouragingly, but not familiarly on my arm; "you see, sir, this is a hugely business, and may give me more trouble than I expect. It's ten o'clock now. I hope, sir, and I believe, that I shall be able to manage your little affair; and as you won't bring it into court (but it's a pity that you won't), and as you don't mind a twenty, and no questions asked, you may have your carriage at the door at four o'clock to-morrow morning; and, if David Wilkins, &c., can place that 'ere note in your hand, you shall have it, and no mistake. Don't you be down-hearted," he continued. "You know, I *likes* the business; and I'd take a deal of pains to serve a man as sticks to his friend as you stick to yours. Only, you know, no questions asked."

I confess that I shook Mr. Wilkins warmly by the hand. He was about to leave the room, when it struck me that I had not offered him any refreshment, and I now did so, pressing him to eat

and drink. "Well, sir, as you mentions it," he said, "I don't mind confessing that I do find much talking wery dry work, and as I have no time to go home, I will avail myself of your kindness. I looks *to-wards* you, sir," he added, filling himself a glass of wine, and bowing to me with exaggerated politeness, "and success to our little undertaking."

I need not say how heartily I responded to the latter part of the sentiment; and in a moment more Mr. Wilkins had bowed himself out of the room.

I rang the bell, and ordered them to have the carriage, in which I had come, at the door at four o'clock in the morning, and then I sat down to struggle, as best I could, with the feelings which were stirring so fiercely in my breast. There was the yearning desire to be back at my uncle's side, that I might hold his hand once more in mine, and wipe from his brow the sweat of death which, perchance, was even now gathering upon it. Stronger still, there was my anxiety for my friend, and my uncertainty as to his future. Strongest of all was, my restless, I may almost say, my fierce impatience for the return of the man who was to be the bearer, in all human probability, of my friend's fate to me. It was only ten o'clock, and, perhaps, he would not return until four, and how should I spend the intervening time which seemed an age when I thought of it. Perhaps he would *not* succeed, and the thought almost drove me

mad. I made up my mind that I would not think of it, and, accordingly, took up a book in order to read; but I had not read two minutes before I was as deep in thought as ever, and the book fell from my hand upon the ground. Ten o'clock—eleven—twelve. It seemed, indeed, an age since he had gone. I threw myself upon the sofa, under the delusion that I might snatch an hour's sleep, and thus be ready to start at four o'clock without delay. I might as well have endeavoured to do anything most impossible, and, after a few minutes, I sprang to my feet, and, pacing up and down the room with hasty steps, I struggled and fought with the impatience and the anxiety which seemed as if they would drive me mad. One o'clock—two—and every minute appeared an hour, and still no sign of his coming. The weary, weary minutes lagged on, and the clocks struck three, and I thought that I could bear it no longer. I felt the blood careering wildly through my veins. I felt the cold sweat standing in big drops upon my brow; and I threw myself into an arm-chair, and, grasping the sides of it with my trembling hands, I absolutely struggled and fought more fiercely than ever with my devouring impatience. Half-past three, and the first faint streaks of the breaking day came stealing hazily in through the window which I had thrown open, in my anxiety, to catch the slightest sound which might give notice of his coming; and, now I was certain that he had failed, and that all was lost. Oh, the fearful weight of

moments such as these! I think there can be no torture in the world, full of pain and anguish as it is, equal to them. Every moment was an age; and I felt as if I could not bear it much longer—felt as if I must do something desperate—felt that all was lost, and that I could never look my friend in the face again—felt that I could never return to tell him of his misery and his shame. I was distracted for a moment by hearing the carriage, which I had ordered, drive round to the door. At the same instant the clocks struck four, and he had *not* come. With two or three great groans I threw myself upon the sofa, and buried my face in its cushions, and cried aloud in the bitter anguish, in the overwhelming grief of that sad hour. Suddenly a cab was driven furiously down the street. In an instant I sprang to my feet, and was listening with all my faculties strained to their utmost tension. Oh, Heaven be praised, it stops! A loud noise of feet upon the stairs; my brain swims, and my eyes grow so dim that I can scarcely see; but I stagger over to the door. It is all confusion; but, still, I see him rush in, hot and flushed, waving a piece of paper triumphantly in his hand. I know that I give one loud cry. I know that I endeavour to strain the insignificant looking little man to my heart, and, then, I feel them catching me in their arms as, for the first and only time in my life, I fall down in a faint.

I soon came round, however, and the first thing I saw was Mr. Wilkins holding the paper before my

eyes. With the characteristic caution of his profession, he had sent the servants from the room, so that we were alone. I caught his hand in mine, and, in the excess of my gratitude, I believe, that I pressed it to my lips. He drew it quickly away, and spoke to me cheerfully and pleasantly. "Now you're all right, sir," he said; "cheer up, and make yourself comfortable. You *did* take on, to be sure; and I must say that it ain't pleasant to see gents go off in fainting fits. I know wery well that I was wery long a-coming, for it was a tougher job than even I expected, but your friend may make himself easy, for Mr. Langley won't give him any more trouble, or my name ain't David Wilkins, &c. Only let me catch him at it, that's all," and Mr. Wilkins placed the coveted paper in my hand.

I scanned it curiously; and certainly the imitation of my uncle's signature was perfect. "What shall I do with it?" I asked of Mr. Wilkins, who was standing quite close to me still.

"Well, sir," he answered, "It ain't for me to say. You have got it, and you can do as you likes with it; but I may, perhaps, be allowed to remark that there's a fire in the grate, and that a fire is sometimes very 'andy. Well, I do declare," he continued, walking over to the window, "if the day ain't a breaking, and no mistake."

I took the hint, and whilst Mr. Wilkins, turning his back to me, gazed with a great appearance of interest through the open window, I went over to the fire and dropped the paper into the flames.

They caught it, as I fancied, greedily in their destroying embrace, and, in an instant, it had disappeared. As I watched the little wreath of white smoke which arose from it vanish up the chimney, God alone knows what a weight was taken off my heart. God alone knows the unutterable sensation of relief which thrilled through every vein in my body.

I turned to Mr. Wilkins, and asked hastily what I was to give him, for I was eager to set off at once. "We said twenty, sir," he answered shortly. "Twenty was our bargain, and it couldn't be done for less."

I tried to press a £50 note upon him, but he would not take it. "A bargain, sir's, a bargain," he answered to all my entreaties; "and when a man makes a bargain, it's my opinion as how he ought to stick to it." All that I could do was to make him take a few pounds with which to buy some presents for his children, and he only consented to do this when he saw how much his refusal pained me.

He went down to the carriage with me. As we passed the clock in the hall I saw that it was half-past four. When I was seated and ready to start, I told him again how grateful I was to him, and held out my hand to him. He took it, and shook it warmly. "I appreciate the honour which you do me, sir," he said, "and I thank you for it. God bless you, sir," he went on, very heartily; "I hope your friend will find all things pleasant now.

I wish every young man as gets into difficulties had such a friend as you." He would not listen to the protestation which I strove to make against his praise of me, but continued, more warmly than ever, "I hope, sir, as you may never need my services again; but, if you do, you know where to find me; and, Lord love you," he cried, shaking my hand again, "I'd take a deal of pains to serve a man as sticks to his friend as you stick to yours. All right," he said to the driver. "All right. Good-bye, sir, and success attend you."

I waved my hand to him, and we drove away. I never needed his services again, and I have never seen him since, but I remember him kindly; for, although he was an insignificant-looking little man, and although his profession wasn't a pleasant one, to say nothing of his murder of the king's English, still, he served me, in a great need, faithfully and truly. I am sure, spite of his profession, that his heart was in the right place; and that's a great thing in a man after all, and makes up for the want of a vast deal of mere polish. The diamond may be rough, but it doesn't cease to be a diamond for all that.

CHAPTER IX.

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WE were clear of London about five o'clock. I urged the driver to do his utmost, and we journeyed at full speed all day. I think we were within some three miles of Morley House, when, hearing the hoofs of a horse, I looked from the carriage, and saw a groom, in the family livery, passing at a gallop. When he espied me, he pulled up at once. "I was coming for you, sir," he said, touching his hat. "The colonel has taken a sudden change for the worse, and the family are very anxious about your arrival."

It was a great blow to me, although of course I was partly prepared for it. Still, my heart had been so comparatively light since the moment when I knew my friend was rescued from his great peril, that I felt the news of my uncle's sudden change all the more heavily. The driver urged his horses to their utmost speed, and we were there in a very short time. I ran up at once to my uncle's room. As I entered he opened his eyes, and I saw that he knew me. As I bent down, and, in the knowledge of the great change that was close upon him, kissed him reverently on the brow, he looked lovingly into my face and smiled. They

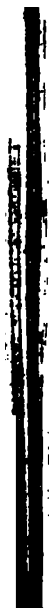


presence of its God. I closed his eyes, I kissed him once again upon his face, and, then, I fell upon my knees and tried to pray that God might grant him light and everlasting rest, only the *words* were smothered in my sobs; so that all I could do was to raise my *heart* to God in humble and in fervent prayers for him and his, now more dear to me than ever.

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When the first great gush of grief was over, I took Charley's hand in mine, and led him up to the dead man's room. They had laid him out in state, and the walls were hung with rich and heavy velvet, studded all over with the old Danish emblem—the crest of our family. When we had knelt for a little time in prayer, I raised my friend, and, then, I told him that he was free from his great peril, that he was free to walk abroad and look honest men, without shrinking, in the face; and I conjured him, in a few and burning words, for the sake of him who slept so calm and still before us, never to forget the peril out of which God had so mercifully taken him, never again to place himself in such a fearful strait. I besought him, in the fullness of my love for him, to turn his back once and for all upon the past; to be, through all the coming years, all that his own heart told him that he ought to be.

He pressed me in his arms for one brief moment, and whispered something which I could not hear. Then he turned and laid his face against his



CHAPTER X.

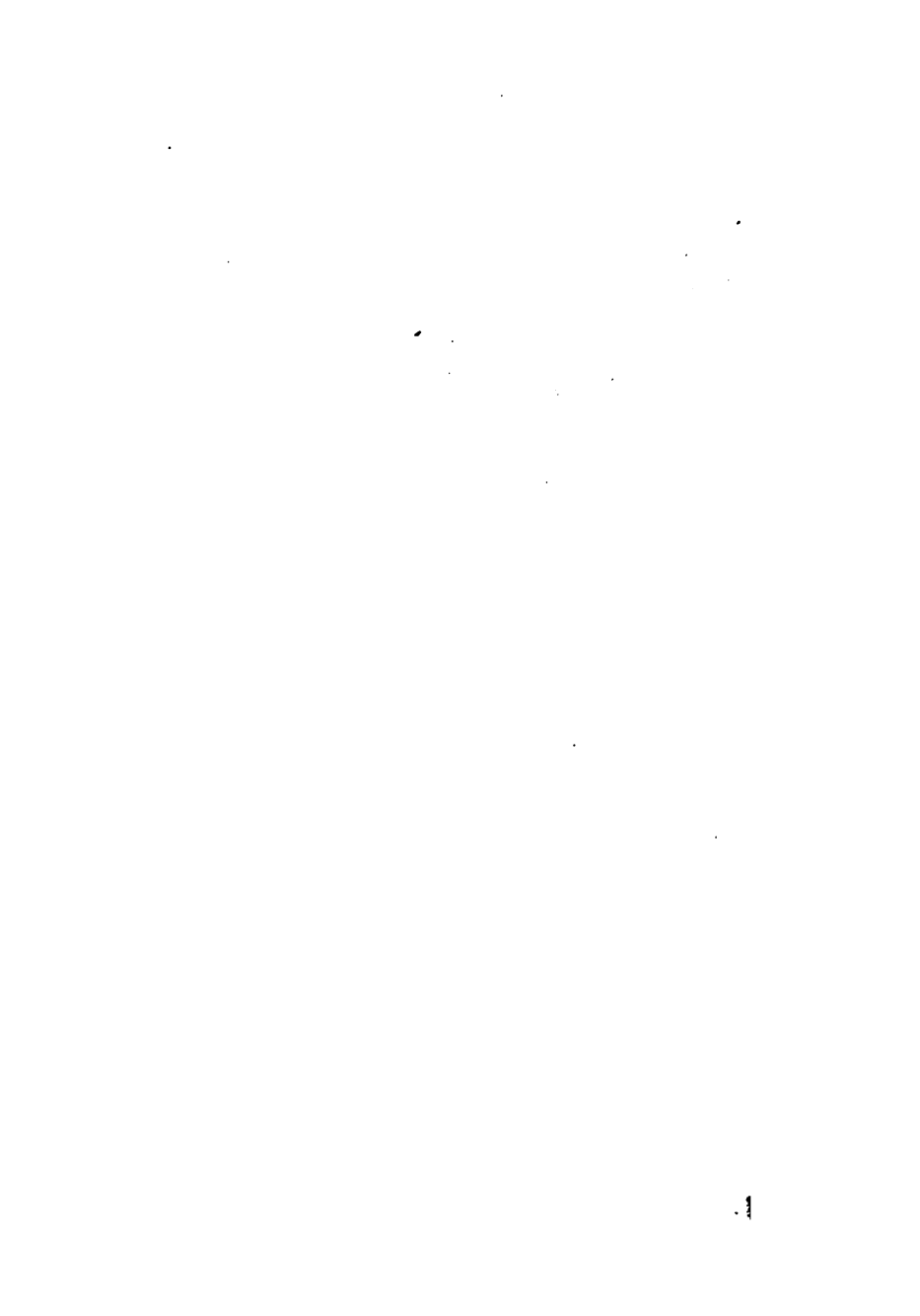
My uncle had left full directions about his funeral in a paper, which was handed to me by the family lawyer. In accordance with these wishes, we took him away to the North and laid him for one day and one night in the old Manor House of Hardinge, ere we consigned him to his long, last home in the family vault in the church which stood just outside the lodge gates. It was under these circumstances that I saw, for the first time, the home of my fathers; it was as a mourner following my uncle's corpse, that my foot first passed its threshold. We laid him in the old gothic library—a room so dark and sombre, with its oaken panelling and its deeply recessed and arched windows, as to be full well adapted for the sad use to which it was now converted. The tenants of the estate had met us at the entrance gates, and, preceded by them, we bore him through the silent passages of the still, deserted house, and laid him in the place prepared for him. Tapers were burning in massive silver candelabra, and all that precious plate and costly velvet could effect, had been done to give due honour to the poor cold clay, which was now alike insensible to honour or neglect. As with slow and solemn steps we

entered in, chaunting the prayers of good old Catholic times, is it strange that, for the moment, every other thought was driven from my mind by the memories which rushed impetuously through my soul? Is it strange that, for the moment, I could only think that it was in this very room that my darling had, in the bitter days gone by, been blighted by his father's curse—that it was in this very room he had been bidden to leave for ever and ever his father's house, and go forth, a stranger and an outcast upon the world—that it was in this very room he had listened to the sentence of his own beggary—that it was in this very room he had fallen, bathed in his own blood, at the feet of the brother whom we now brought in, a lifeless corpse himself, but, over whom, oh, God be thanked, the church's prayers were rising to the throne of Grace. Is it strange, I say, that as these thoughts rushed through my mind, the solemn words of prayer and supplication faded all away, and that the very room seemed to swim beneath my feet, till I was fain to clutch for support at those who stood near me? It was only for a moment, however. When they had laid him in the place prepared, and covered him with the velvet pall, I had recovered myself so that I was able to step forward and place a silver crucifix upon his coffin. I was able to pray once more, even from my very inmost heart, that all the past might be forgotten, and hidden away in the saving wounds of Him who hung

upon that cross. I was able to pray, that never more might the slightest thought of all the heavy wrongs, which for His dear sake I had already so earnestly striven to forgive and forget, obtrude itself upon my mind. I was able to throw myself upon my knees, and, without one bitter thought, beseech the God, who, in His mercy, had been so good to me, to grant unto my uncle's soul His light, His peace, His everlasting rest. "*Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine ; et lux perpetua luceat ei.*"

You, courteous reader, will conceive much more easily than I could describe, the various sensations which filled my soul during the first day or two which I spent in the Manor House of Hardinge. Perhaps it was well for me that I was so much occupied with the necessary arrangements for the funeral, which devolved upon me, and with the constant care and attention which poor Charley required at my hands. He had walked about in a dazed kind of a way ever since his father's death, speaking to no one; taking no notice of any one but his mother and myself. To us he never spoke; but every now and then he came over to one or other of us, and laid his poor head upon our breasts, and broke out, again and again, into loud and bitter cries, refusing to be comforted, refusing to admit one word of consolation. At my earnest request, coupled with the doctor's positive command, she had remained behind at Morley House, when we removed my uncle's corpse, so that Charley was altogether in





He also left it to our love to procure for him the abundant succours of the Church, and to distribute, in charity, for the good of his soul, such a sum as our affection should suggest.

Such, divested of its legal technicalities, was the substance of his will. As the lawyer, in his cold, measured voice, read out its provisions, I listened like one half stupified. This, then, was the reparation to which my uncle had alluded on his deathbed, and which I then could not understand. Even now I could hardly realize it; and I felt as if I would have given all the world to have been able to have undone the drawing of that will which conferred such undreamt of wealth upon me—wealth which, in truth, I had never desired, and for which I had so little use. My first thought was, that I had robbed him whose head was resting with such a heavy weight upon my breast, and, instinctively, I bowed my face and laid it against his. Then, unmindful of the tenants, who were now pressing round us, I raised his head that I might look into his eyes, as I whispered to him: “Oh, Charley, oh, my brother, believe me, indeed, indeed, I did not know of this. Believe me, this can never, never be.” I do not wish, nay, I *cannot* dwell upon the scene which followed, as I pleaded with him with all my heart and soul—as I protested that this could never be, that this thing could never stand.

I repeat that I cannot dwell upon this. I only know that he clung about my neck, and strove

to stop my mouth, as I went on with hot and hasty words. I only know, that, in the end, he fell upon the ground, and clasped my knees in the earnestness of his entreaty. I only know, that, last of all, as, in my stern resolve, I clenched my hands and turned away my head from him, I felt the arms which, up to this, had clasped my knees so lovingly, so beseechingly, suddenly relax their hold. Then, there was a heavy fall upon the floor—a sudden cry of horror from those around us—a hurrying to and fro of many feet—and he was lying before me to all appearance dead, his golden hair covering my feet, and the blood gushing from his mouth and nostrils upon my clothes, as I bent down and took him, oh, how lovingly, how tenderly, in my arms, and bore him to the bed from which he did not rise for many a weary day.

We nursed him long and tenderly. His mother or myself never left his side; but, for a long time, we feared that all our care would be in vain. The shock of his father's death, the excitement of the funeral, and the unfortunate scene at the reading of the will, had been too much for his already weakened frame; and, in his struggle to make me accept my share of the property, he had broken a blood-vessel. His state was very critical for some time; but he had youth and a good constitution in his favour, and he gradually rallied. At first his grief for his father's death was excessive, nay, immoderate; but, as I was ever at his bedside, I soon regained my old influence over him, and was

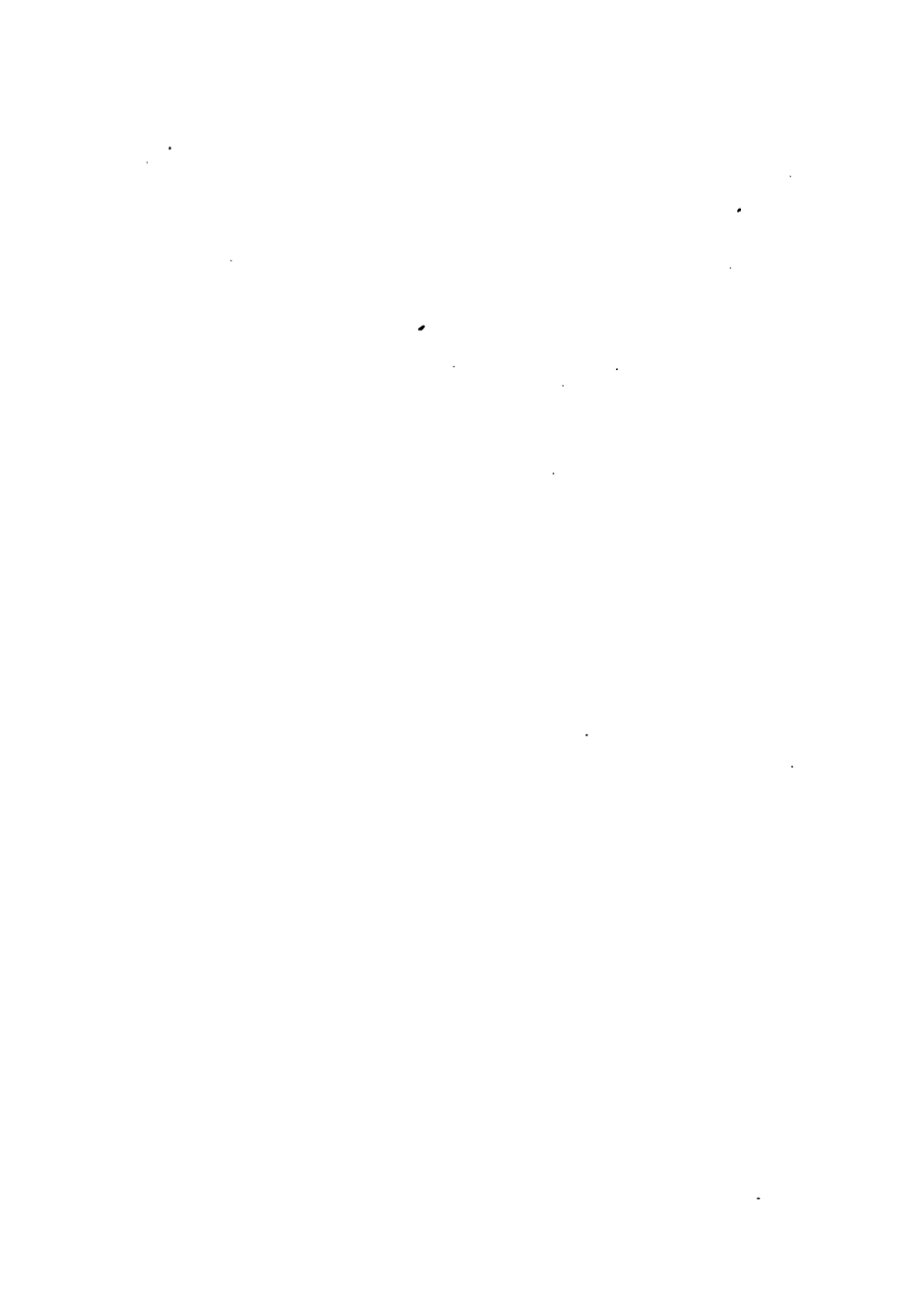
able to lead his mind to healthier thoughts than those on which he was inclined to brood. His mother and I spoke to him much of conformity to God's adorable will, of patience and resignation to the chastening hand, which never strikes except in love and tender mercy. By degrees, too, we were able to lead his mind back to the remembrance of his early days, when he had knelt at his mother's knee, when he had made his childish confession and been so happy, because so good and pure. As these holy memories came back to him in all the softening influences of his sick room, his heart began to yearn once more towards the God from whom, in his youth and folly, he had strayed away. As his heart turned, in his simple childlike sorrow, to its God, grace came down once more upon his soul, and finished the work which loving, though unworthy, hands had ventured to begin. He prayed earnestly for the sacraments of God's holy Church; and, one gentle evening in the spring, when the very scent of the flowers which was wafted in through the open window—when the very song of the innocent birds outside—when, in a word, all nature seemed to whisper of love, of peace, and rest, I led to his side the same venerable old man who had brought hope and comfort to his father's soul. I left them alone, and fell upon my knees outside the door. I draw a veil, too, over that sacred scene. I know that he who, in his day, had been very weak and very foolish, had met with one who could understand

it all, and judge between a loving God, whose highest prerogative is His mercy, and a weary sinner, whose highest prerogative it is to be allowed to lay his sins and his sorrows at his Father's feet. I know that a weary head was pillowed on a gentle and a sympathising breast; and, that, in the gentle silence of the evening twilight, the priceless blood of the Lamb came flowing down upon a crimson soul, and washed it from its stains, and made it whiter than the driven snow. Yes, I know all this; and I seek to know no more.

Two or three months later I was waving my hand to them, and begging God to speed them, as I watched the vessel which bore Charley and his mother on their way to Italy, Charley having been ordered to spend some months in that genial clime in order to secure the perfect restoration of his health.

CHAPTER XI.

A FEW words more, gentle reader, and I have done. Some two years had passed since I stood upon the pier and watched the vessel which bore my friends away in search of health and rest, and, one fine evening in the summer, I stood upon the noble flight of steps which led to the front door of the old Manor House of Hardinge, and, with more of thankfulness and happy feelings swelling in my heart than I care to endeavour to express in words, strained my eyes to catch the first glimpse of a carriage which I was anxiously expecting. Merry peals were ringing from the steeple of the old church outside the lodge gate. As my eye glanced down the stately avenue, it fell upon groups of sturdy, well-dressed farmers, crowding round the entrance—upon knots of villagers arrayed in all their Sunday best—and, prettiest sight of all, upon two long lines of innocent children, clad in white, with baskets of fresh flowers in their hands. I have waited some half hour or so, when the eager pressing of the crowds around the gate, and the ringing cheers which fall upon my ears, tell me that those I expect are at hand. I see the tenants unharnessing the horses from an open carriage, that, with willing hands, they may draw it



rise and turn away, who shall say how many chastening recollections of the past have left their solemn stamp upon our souls—hallowing the memory of those who have gone before—drawing tighter and tighter still the bond of fathomless love which binds us to one another—strengthening, in our souls, our firm unwavering resolve, that, with God's never-failing help, the sun of happier fortunes, which has at length risen on the House of Hardinge, shall still shine on with undiminished, never-setting rays. After I have led them through the house, and when they have done admiring it, I take an opportunity of drawing her on one side that I may place a paper in her hand. I bid her take it to Charley that he may read it for her, and then I hurry away as fast as ever I can. In a few minutes they follow me; and, when they have found me, there ensues a scene which I must be excused from attempting to describe. There is much talk, and many earnest, energetic protestations; but the end of it all is, that, although they are kissing my hands and hanging about my neck, I have my way, nevertheless, and the Manor House of Hardinge is my wedding gift to Charley and his bride.

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Years pass rapidly away, and so many years have floated down the stream of time since the day I welcomed them to their home, that Charley and I are getting well on in years now. Our mother (for, in truth, she was as much a mother to

me as to him), passed to her rest some fifteen years ago, venerable in the comeliness and beauty of her sweet old age, tranquil in the firm assurance of her lively faith, and of a life spent in continual works of charity and mercy; happy in the constant love and care of those who watched about her, and smoothed her peaceful passage to the grave. I need scarcely say that Charley and I did not quarrel about the division of the property. There is one point, and one point alone, I think, on which I have not been able to have all my own way in my dealings with him. Although, at my urgent request, he has consented to reside permanently on the estate, he has always been inflexible in his determination to compel me to receive my share of its rental. I have thus had the means of doing some little good, which might otherwise have been out of my power; but, when I have passed away, the children, who are already growing up, and who throng round me with such boisterous love whenever I run down to spend a few days with them, shall have no reproach to cast upon their uncle's memory.

I am a very happy man. In the discharge of duties, which I prize above all treasures of this earth, my years glide peacefully away. Latterly, failing health has compelled me to take a good deal of rest, and I cannot tell you how they watch and care for me when I go down to Hardinge House. Many and many an hour Charley and I sit, hand in hand, and, as I speak to him of

the autumn leaves which are falling around us both, he only draws the closer to me, and clasps my hand more tightly still, and whispers, that as we have been faithful in our lives, so, please God, will we be faithful, too, in death. It is at his request that I have penned this simple record of our lives, in the belief that it will not be altogether uninteresting to many who will take it up. I am fain, too, to hope that some, at least, may learn a lesson from the tale which I have, in all earnestness and simplicity of heart and purpose, striven to tell. I think it would not have been in my power to write a very exciting story; and, even if it had, the incidents related in this history would not have formed sufficient matter for a story of that description. Some, perchance, may think this simple tale dull and uninteresting. Still I have written, and now I publish it, because I think it is good for all of us to be brought, from time to time, face to face to the merciful dealings of God with the sons of men. It is good for all of us to know, that for every shadow which falls athwart our path, some light will surely shed its cheering ray upon us in God's good time. It is best of all for us to know, and in our inmost souls realize the happy truth, that the hand which never strikes, except in love and mercy, will, in the end, surely cause all the troubles and afflictions of this world to work together for our good, if we do but strive to walk along the path of life with simple, faithful, kindly hearts, doing our

best, each one in his own humble way, to embody in our lives and reduce to daily practice, that divine precept which was first sung by angel lips over the cradle of the God made Man. "*Glory to God in the highest, and, on earth, peace to men of good will.*" It is with this object I have penned this little book; and this, dear reader, will, I trust, plead my cause with you, and dispose you to overlook and forget the imperfections which, perchance, you may have discovered in its pages.

“ The liquid drops of Tears that you have shed
Shall come again, transform'd to orient Pearl;
Advantaging their loan, with interest
Often-times—double gain of happiness.”

THE END.

